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QUEEN
CALAFIA

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BY

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BLASCO
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AUTHOR OF "THE 1978 EDITION OF
THEASCOULTURE," "THE 1978 EDITION OF"



THORNTON BUTTERWORTH, LTD.
15 BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

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CHAPTER I

*The doings of Professor Mascaro upon leaving
Central University one fine morning.*

Four times each week, after delivering his lecture on Spanish-American history and literature, Don Antonio Mascaro made it a habit to walk back to his home situated at the opposite end of Madrid.

During the first years of their married life, the Mascaros lived in the vicinity of the University. Their only daughter, however, grew up to be a young lady; and Doña Amparo, her mother, whose power in domestic administration was unlimited and whose judgments as to the family honour were undisputed, thought it proper to leave a neighbourhood much frequented by students. Don Antonio himself had in the meantime made several trips abroad and developed a great liking for the modern improvements to be had in other

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countries. The result was profound dissatisfaction with dwellings that were fitted out in conformity with the requirements of a hundred years ago.

Remembering his impressions of "the other world"—for thus he called the American continent—Don Antonio gladly accepted his wife's choice of a home in the Salamanca district, not far from the Plaza de Toros. There was a telephone in the vestibule, an elevator—going-up privileges only—and a bathroom which, although small, contained all the approved appliances; and the bathtub did not have to be converted into a storage place for hat-boxes as in many antiquated apartments. In short, Don Antonio thought a man of progressive habits and not rich ought to feel satisfied with all this and not sigh for more.

To be sure, the new home was quite a distance from the University; but this required of him only eight long walks a week, something quite necessary for a scholar spending a good deal of his time with his elbows upon a desk, his head between his palms, and his somewhat near-sighted eyes scanning at close range the pages of a book.

On his way home, Don Antonio would stop here and there at second-hand bookshops the proprietors of which welcomed him cordially; and there would be a chat about recent acquisitions. They all knew where his special preference lay: works, modern and ancient, on America, although once in a while he trespassed into the realm of novels and poetry.

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A few among his bookseller friends thought they knew the reason that prompted Don Antonio to buy such things: time and again they noticed, among the obscure volumes of fiction he bought at the price of waste paper, two historical novels and a book of poems written by young Mascaro at the time he taught a general course in literature at a provincial university.

Don Antonio would progress in this manner all the way up to the Puerta del Sol. Here, his thoughts usually took an entirely different course. The man who strolled down the spacious Calle de Alcalá no longer seemed to himself a modest professor leading a monotonous life and having a few limited aspirations, who had just walked through the narrow and devious streets of old Madrid. He was now Professor Mascaro, Spanish delegate to various international congresses and the noted lecturer who had visited many a university in North and South America.

He seemed to change inwardly as he made his way toward the modern part of the city where his house was situated. He felt less short-sighted as his gaze lost itself in the long avenue that reached the Puerta de Alcalá and in the reposeful groves of the Retiro. The air that now entered his lungs had a decidedly different fragrance. The sensation of his feet touching the asphalt pavement brought back to him certain subtle feelings connected with the Boulevard des Italiens, Piccadilly, and Broadway. Toward the end of his long walk, Mascaro felt more than ever alert and pleasantly excited. Then it

was that his best ideas came to him as though the easy walking uninterrupted by stumbling, and the conspicuous absence of bad odours unavoidable in the old city, had a beneficial effect upon his intelligence.

One spring morning, on his way home from the University, Don Antonio stopped irresolutely at the Puerta del Sol. The pale-golden atmosphere and the midday agitation of the Calle de Alcalá appealed to him. On the other hand, he thought it might be well to take a street car to the park of the Retiro and take a walk there until dinner time. At his house dinner was usually served at two o'clock in the afternoon, as is the custom in many Madrid families; thus he had enough time to enjoy some leisure in the park which he loved so well and which, together with the Museo del Prado, he considered the two best things Madrid could offer. However, a short hesitation resulted, as usual, in a third decision.

"I may just as well go to see Richardo Balboa," he said to himself. "I haven't been up there for two days, and he might be ill, after all. You never can tell with these people who have a sick heart."

He took a street car in the direction of his own house, for Engineer Balboa lived in the same neighbourhood. He remained standing upon the rear platform to enjoy the sight of automobiles and carriages passing so closely as almost to touch the edges of the car. Upon reaching the narrowest part of the avenue, he noticed many passers-by

standing still and gazing with intense curiosity. Something was happening.

Passengers in the street car stood up to be able to see what it was, and the two platforms became centres of animated comment. Everybody was looking at an open motor car occupied by two ladies and speeding towards Madrid. Mascaro gave a gesture of pity and contempt as if he regretted deeply the astonishment exhibited by the crowd.

"Nothing more nor less," he said to himself, "than a woman at the wheel of a motor car. Some foreigner, most probably. And this is what makes these people stare like sheep at a new gate. Never before have they beheld such a scandal. Poor, backward country!"

The automobile was out of sight; but Don Antonio, who was an imaginative type, still had the picture before his eyes and bubbled over with admiration for the woman driver, although the speed of the car had prevented him from getting any impression of her face.

From his early youth, he persisted in such instinctive admiration for women whom he classed as "extraordinary." He never saw them except in illustrated journals, or else portrayed in novels or on the stage. But oh, for the love of such a woman! . . .

Indeed, his life could be called a double life. One that pursued peacefully its monotonous course within the limits of reality; and the other, incessantly interrupted with vehement outbursts—

but entirely imaginative. The narrow world of space and time knew him as a faithful and loving husband, somewhat tolerantly ironical toward his Doña Amparo, to whom he was indebted for being the father of Consuelito. All the illusions and aspirations of his practical life were coloured by his love for this only child. But when alone, in the secret recesses of his mind, he was an unrestrained and insatiable lover of love who never stopped before the most hazardous adventures, unscrupulously abandoning one for the other, or else pursuing several at a time. Such waywardness, fortunately, had no more serious consequences than a mere brain fatigue ; and so his imagination, once started on its endless game of amorous fancies, worked without respite.

In his youth, the great prima donnas of the opera were objects of his dreams. To be chosen by one of those inimitable sopranos, resplendent with beauty, fame, and jewels, adored by kings and millionaires ! Poor Doña Amparo was very far from ever guessing that her quiet husband, with his dreamy gaze fixed on space as though he were planning lectures and conferences, was instead following over land and sea the trail of some famous operatic star.

His taste, however, changed after he had completed several voyages through the world of realities. The sportswoman now excited his admiration with her lean, muscular figure, her resemblance to a handsome boy in a woman's apparel, her perverse suggestion of ambiguity of sex. Beauty was no longer perfect to him unless dressed in a white skirt

and a gaily-coloured sweater, a tennis racket in hand. Another accepted variation was a woman motorist, in man's cap and big, rough gloves, gripping her wheel with intelligent determination.

The peaceful scholar undertook more than one risky voyage around the world with one or another of these superior women. Her yacht would breast heavy storms, encounter Malay pirates, and ground upon solitary coral reefs. Other women of no less masculine charm, with rolled-up sleeves and shouldered rifles, took him along on hunting expeditions to the heart of Africa, where they shot hippopotami and panthers. He also had various opportunities of attacking, knife in hand, a polar bear several times his size, in order to defend his fair travelling companions somewhere in the endless polar plains.

While going through all these adventures, Mascaro carefully avoided visualizing his own image as he knew it in real life. He was afraid to deal an irreparable blow to all his romantic excursions the moment he saw his less than medium stature, his swarthy face with already deepening wrinkles, his hair, that used to be the shining black of Mediterranean type and was now grey over the temples; and his entire appearance of a good-natured gentleman that imparted something of quietness and confidence to the very atmosphere around him. He much preferred that other ego of his who skulked, a seductive demon, deep in his brain—the Mascaro who conquered women at a single glance, who made

them follow him like so many submissive dogs and changed his affections without pity or consideration. The Mascaro of his dreams was a handsome youth ready to intimidate Death itself, who paid scant attention to his various lady companions while he put to flight, with a single pistol shot, both his rivals and the red-, yellow-, or black-skinned crowds of hostile natives who stood in his way.

Whenever these inventions had exhausted themselves for a while, Don Antonio used to laugh at his own imaginative escapades. His was, however, a mild and tolerant irony. There was much forgiveness in his indulgent smile for himself as well as for a large portion of mankind.

"Fortunately," he thought, "our cranium is of bone and cannot reflect the images that pass beneath its surface. What if it were like the walls of an aquarium, that permit us to watch the life of those nervous and furtive beings inside? . . ."

He was convinced that human society could not endure twenty-four hours if we were able to read each other's thoughts and to watch those kaleidoscopic revels of an individual's imagination which disregard his conscience, refuse obedience, and create for him another existence. No child could respect its parents if it knew all their thoughts. Married couples, outwardly faithful, would be deeply shocked at the differences and the enmities laid between them by the vagaries of their imaginations. Grandchildren would be petrified at reading their grandfather's wild fancies behind his

deeply-wrinkled forehead. No wonder persons of very austere life, upon reaching extreme old age and losing the discipline imposed by cool reason, often amaze their intimates by a licentious form of senile dementia revealing a second personality that heretofore had been carefully held in secret.

What would become of statesmen and judges, men of grave appearance and weighty speech, who feel called upon to watch over their neighbours, if their minds at any time betrayed the chaotic thoughts, the monstrous desires, that criss-cross their brains like lightning as soon as imagination is freed from restraint?

"Many of us," Don Antonio went on reasoning to himself, "persons of quiet life and sedate habits, possess a veritable harem in our secret thoughts, where we take refuge and consolation in our life of mediocrity. The most extraordinary perversities and love adventures in the world have never existed in reality: they were lived through in the imagination of quiet and lonely fathers of families."

If ever, in the midst of these revelries, Don Antonio recalled Doña Amparo, his wife, it only gave keener incentive to his dreams. At such moments he became aware of a sense of sweet revenge, as if his numerous and fanciful infidelities compensated him for her despotism at home. But the mere thought of his daughter was enough to hurl to the ground all of his perverse air castles. Shame and remorse would come, and gnaw his heart.

This time, too, the glorious train of fancy that followed in the wake of the strange motorist ended like so many others of his escapades ; a young girl vaguely resembling Consuelito stepped on to the street car. Instantly, a supreme force ejected Don Antonio from the promised land. He stood before the closed doors of Paradise, helpless, remorseful.

But unable to endure mental inactivity, other things now captured his attention. Forgetting about women who drive cars and all women in general, his thoughts were directed wholly upon the friend he was going to visit—his mind concentrated with the austerity of one who still feels the whip of remorse on his back.

He did not remember with certainty the time he first met Ricardo Balboa. They were almost childhood friends, having studied and won their university degrees together.

Mascaro's family had lived in Madrid because of his father's employment ; but Don Antonio was a *mediterraneo*, born in a little town in the Levant province. The first impressions childhood had afforded him were of a turquoise sea in the morning, the same sea turned to an intense azure at noon-time and fading to violet in the evening ; of a red-clay coast barren of vegetation except for some fragrant and stubborn desert growth, and of an undulating chain of almost incandescent hills that thirstily drank in the ardent sunlight and exhaled it back again from their bare, porous rocks.

The father of the young Balboa was Spanish, but

had made a handsome fortune in Mexico. Mascaro remembered that his friend's mother spoke Castilian with difficulty and often appealed to her husband in English to extricate her from a verbal quandary. Ricardo was born in Mexico and began his education in a primary school near the frontier of the United States. But he was a Spaniard, and his father, with the high-strung patriotism of one who lives away from his country and longs to return to it, never for a moment brooked the supposition that a child of his might grow up with a nationality different from his own. And so, having accumulated his fortune, the elder Balboa had transferred the business to an associate and had come to live in Madrid. In this way, his son was not going to be either a *gringo* like his mother, or a Mexican because of having been born in Mexico. He was to receive the education of a Spaniard.

In his early youth Mascaro, who came from a poor family, was introduced to those affluent Americans who spent their money without measure or regret.

Young Balboa studied mining engineering. His father wanted to develop his mines and thought in this way to evade the necessity of hiring foreign experts—a veritable plague for him for he was a man of genius but without the specialized knowledge which his affairs required. Mascaro, on the other hand, chose courses in literature, partly from natural inclination, partly with the hope of so making for himself a living and a career as a scholar.

Ricardo completed his studies and went to Mexico. Mascaro discontinued his visits. While teaching in the provinces, he heard that Balboa the elder had died and that his widow, no longer having ties between her and an alien country, had returned to America.

Twelve years passed and Mascaro was well on in his career. He had become a professor in Madrid when a colleague in California, with whom he kept up a steady correspondence, arranged for him to go to Berkeley University for a course of lectures on the Golden Age of Spanish drama. Mascaro sailed for New York and from there went to San Francisco where he took a room at the same hotel in which his old friend Balboa happened to be stopping.

A mutual exchange of confidences revealed the fact that Balboa had led a very eventful life during the years that had elapsed since their last meeting. He was still rich as compared to Don Antonio, but his fortune had greatly shrunk. The Mexican mines from which the family fortune was originally derived were not producing so well as formerly. Then, too, the insatiable demon of inventions held Engineer Balboa in his power. He insisted on carrying out in practice his own as well as other men's inventions in industry, each time suffering enormous losses.

Balboa had married a Spanish girl from Mexico, the daughter of an old friend of his father's, but their marriage continued only long enough for a baby to arrive and to grow a few months old. The wife then died; the tiny boy, who received the

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romantic name of Florestan, was left with his relatives in Mexico, and his father went to New York where he could give himself up to his speculations and his eccentric business ventures. After this chance meeting, the two men kept up a lively correspondence. In a few months Engineer Balboa came to Madrid planning to stay in Spain for the rest of his life. But the sick man left with a weak heart by his reverses.

His love for the land of his father soon grew stronger as his health failed. Why wander over the world if he really was a Spaniard? Spain offered every opportunity for work? Spain was the real America for him. His restless spirit prompted him on and he exploited abandoned mines using entire new methods of production, to discover oil where wasn't it a shame Spain had none?—and to establish factories like those he knew in the New

Mascaro did not think much of his friend, a business man.

“He’s a dreamer,” he used to say, “he’s away by novelty and never thinks of the practical. He is a poet who tries to apply his fancies to life.”

And right he was. No doubt, Ricardo would have kept intact his father’s fortune; he only cared to follow the mediocre and prudent advice of those who keep their money on the safe side and shun any chances. But he wanted to work—and for him that resulted in failures and bankruptcy.

really going to accomplish something with one of those ideas of his ? ”

The scholar had faith in his friend's gift of invention—and he felt a condescending pity for him. These are the two contradictory feelings often met with by a man who gives himself to the pursuit of new inventions without actually accomplishing anything profitable. Precisely at that time Balboa was proclaiming from the housetops that he had an idea of a “secondary” invention that was, however, important enough to revolutionize the private life of a host of people—indeed, of humanity as a whole. He had discarded his complicated machines—his internal combustion engines of enormously high power and small weight, destined to achieve perfection in submarine and aerial motors. Like a capricious artist who, while taking a rest between two gigantic creations, produces a diminutive, graceful masterpiece, Engineer Balboa was now busying himself with a motion picture invention. For the last few weeks he had talked of nothing else.

As he left the street car, and entered the inventor's house, Don Antonio knew he was going to be again entertained with cinema projects.

His friend's house was built exactly like his own. Of course, it was larger and more richly decorated. Also, the telephone was in the Engineer's own study and not in the vestibule ; but the elevator crept upward as leisurely as it did in Don Antonio's domicile ; and going down on it was not permitted.

Mascaro was considered almost a member of the

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family, so that, without formally announcing his arrival, the servant girl who opened the door showed him into what in former days had been the spacious reception room and was now Balboa's workshop. Don Antonio had to make his way between huge tables made of boards mounted on wooden horses. Drawings and sketches emerging from the brain of a dreamer-mechanic were cut right into the surface of these tables. From walls elaborately decorated by white moulding a quantity of framed drawings looked down upon the visitor, and all about were mountain landscapes marked by mine entrances, geologic cross-sections with their conventionally coloured strata, machinery of unknown purpose. The effect all this had upon Don Antonio was exactly like that produced on him by the mournful photographs and dried-up wreaths that some faithful women keep through interminable years of widowhood so as not to forget their dead for a single moment. Nearly every one of the framed ornaments of Balboa's workshop was the record of some unsuccessful or premature business venture, or of some reckless enterprise that had made away with his inheritance.

The Engineer, absorbed in work over one of his draughting tables, raised his head as Don Antonio entered and shook hands without leaving his work. Mascaro noted the marks of melancholy and suffering and still more of gentleness on his friend's face. His full beard ending in two points, together with his long and neglected hair, heightened the resemblance to Christ's countenance—a somewhat sickly

and blurred likeness as if seen through the dust of ages covering an old picture. The hair was growing thin on the top of his head, its former reddish colour now like silver-gilt with the gold partly worn off.

His face drew immediate attention by its whiteness—the lustreless, dull white of porous paper. It seemed as though light were absorbed by the skin without calling the sap of health to its surface. As soon as Mascaro entered the room, he was struck by this pallor that indicated a weak heart. The condition of his friend's health was clearly evident. He had not seen Balboa for two days, and this pallor now seemed more intense than ever.

Don Antonio solicitously asked about his friend's health. The inventor answered with a deprecating gesture.

"I'm all right. I've worked steadily all these days and I have surely struck the nail on the head this time. It's clear as daylight."

And, with the tenderness of a creator toward his handiwork, he began to describe the invention that had come to him as a plaything in an hour of leisure, but now inspired him with paternal affection.

He was of the opinion that without what he called the "secondary" inventions, universal exploitation and diffusion of the greater discoveries would be impossible. What good would it have done to have invented printing if paper had not been invented first? Parchment could have been used for printing as it had been for manuscripts, but such volumes would have been inaccessible to any but the very rich. Thanks to the discovery of paper manu-

facturing, a secondary and democratic discovery, printing became universal and the fruits of human thought could be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

Balboa was first impressed with the necessity for his newest invention when he realized that the actual situation of the motion picture was similar to the fate of printing as it would have been without paper. The photographic images are made upon gelatine ribbons that are costly and difficult of production. For that reason films remain in the hands of a few exploiters. Just to see a few of these living images a person is obliged to go to a theatre. No one can take them home as he takes a book, or see them at his convenience in a public library. A motion picture apparatus is not extremely costly, and besides, it is bought once in a lifetime only. The prohibitive part of the whole thing is the film. No more than two or three hundred copies are usually made of a cinema production—and that for the whole world! Each film travels from city to city over a whole area where the language of its legends is understood.

All this would be changed as soon as he perfected his new invention. He had found a way of substituting for the expensive gelatine a plain paper film. The material value of such a film would be no more than that of a newspaper.

“Imagine, Antonio—what a complete revolution! People will be able to go and buy a motion picture film and then project it on their family apparatus at home. It will cost no more to put a novel into cinema form than it does to-day to print it as a

at the clock before him. It was noon; the lady in question was a resolute, active, and energetic woman, and she would doubtless be punctual in keeping her appointments. She was due any moment.

Don Antonio, though secretly looking forward to the visit of that extraordinary female, thought it incumbent upon him to counsel prudence to his friend.

"Be quiet. Don't forget that you are not well, and that any argument or excitement is bad for your heart. Remember that she is a woman."

It was precisely this fact that made Balboa despair.

"How can I prove the truth to a woman who does not wish to see it?" he said. "And she is capricious and temperamental in the bargain! If you had only read the last letter she wrote me from Paris! . . ."

His nervousness seemed to sharpen his senses. He turned in the direction of the outside door as if to hear better—and at the same moment the door-bell rang.

"Here she is."

Don Antonio prepared to leave.

"Take it quietly, Ricardo," he admonished once more. "Remember your heart. Good-bye. You'll tell me all about it. We'll all be back to-night."

In the anteroom he passed two ladies whom the maid was showing to the workroom-parlour. He knew them instantly by their figures if not by their faces. They were the two foreigners who

had passed his street car in the Calle de Alcala in the morning.

The one who walked ahead did not attract his attention, for she was of small stature and appeared even more mediocre than she was when compared to her companion. The latter was the one who had driven the motor-car in the morning. Don Antonio had to raise his eyes in order to see her face, for she was tall—superbly tall!—and her expression of assurance and self-confidence was of the sort which often marks persons of royal lineage.

A subtle wave enveloped the scholar and passed—exquisite perfume mingled with the fragrance of a healthy, clean body. Don Antonio thought of these, and then of legendary gardens exhaling mysterious fragrances in blue moonlight. He rapidly noticed splendid teeth—so perfect as to be suspicious—for they actually gleamed in their double frame of intensely red gums and full rosy lips; her complexion with its slight golden tint—the colour of an early orange dimmed by a reddish hue; and finally her eyes, that were black and caught the yellow glint of a piece of gold as she walked by a window. She passed these eyes of hers over his person in a glance of grand and habitual indifference that put a barrier between her and the rest of mankind.

The scholar remained motionless—pensive and undecided—until a dropping door curtain concealed her from his sight. He knew the woman! He had seen her somewhere, there was no doubt about it. But he soon found an answer to the puzzle, and

walked to the door smiling to himself. No, he was not mistaken. He had known her for years and had seen her picture many times in illustrated journals.

She was Queen Calafia !

CHAPTER II

Recalling the Past

THE moment Concha saw Balboa, some of the hostile impulse that had brought her to him left her. She sat down in the armchair he offered ; the modest companion also sat down, without waiting for an invitation.

She answered the Engineer's conventional questions automatically, but her eyes were riveted on him in surprise.

"How he has aged ! . . . I wouldn't know him in the street !" While these thoughts passed through her mind, she involuntarily recalled a long period of her own life. More than half of it passed before her eyes as her lips were mechanically saying polite things to her host.

She saw herself, a girl of fourteen, in Monterey, the most Spanish city of California. The Ceballos family, belonging to the old colonial aristocracy, were descendants of some military or civil dignitaries that had come to Mexico at the time of the Spanish rule in that country. Later, the family

established itself in then remote and quiet California.

These gentlemen cattle-raisers represented the lay population of the towns that had grown up around the Franciscan convents. When Mexico became independent of Spain, the California Missions were instantly doomed to ruin. The new Mexican laws put the holy fathers to flight; they dispersed, and the hidalgos remained in undivided possession of the land. The secluded life they led bred in them a sense of the supreme importance of their noble descent and of their white race. In Los Angeles as well as in San Diego and other old Mission towns, the families that bore old Spanish names kept aloof from common mortals and intermarried among themselves exclusively.

San Francisco was at that time a beautiful, solitary, and unexploited bay. The gold of California lay yet undiscovered, and the great city of to-day was then nothing more than a few adobe houses clustering around a church of Our Lady of Sorrows, and a fort at the entrance of the bay. Monterey, frequently visited by Spanish ships and made the official residence of the authorities delegated by the Viceroy of Mexico, was the capital of the province. It had been the home town of the Ceballos family ever since the end of the eighteenth century when the founder of the line had gone there with Captain Portola.

Little Concha used to hear her father and his friends lament the invasion of California by the "foreigners," thanks to whom the original aspect

of the country had now been lost. Even Conchita herself had known her native town still in its garb of old local tradition—a Monterey now gone forever.

What remained of the places she loved as a child was now crushed and blotted out. The Monterey she used to cherish was a Spanish colonial town of whitewashed one-story adobe dwellings with an inside *patio*, harking back to Arab houses—a style brought to America by *conquistadores*, natives of Andalusia and Estremadura. On rainy days the streets were ravines of mud, in fair weather—bottomless channels of dust which rose in clouds at the least provocation. Carriages were very scarce; all used to ride on horseback, and even the children learned to ride before they could walk. Horses with rich, picturesque Mexican saddles were always to be seen standing in front of the houses. Men put on their spurred boots when they got up in the morning and often slept in them. The rude patriarchal existence was ruled by the unwritten code usual among people dwelling in a solitude where loyalty and hospitality are the two most important things in life.

Always there was music and dancing. Every night there was a dance in some “distinguished” home. Grave, middle-aged *hidalgos*, too, performed the *vals chiqueado*, so called because the gentleman would every now and then interrupt the dance to recite a madrigal to his partner, comparing her to a rose, a pearl, or something else no less exquisite, after which he again encircled

her waist with his arm, and the waltz was continued.

Thus the gentry enjoyed themselves within a strictly exclusive circle, denying themselves the company of all foreigners with the gloomy reserve of aborigines who recognize that they have been overwhelmed.

No less popular were music and dancing with the common people who held their entertainments in the street. Guitars twanged under the bulging window grates ; in the dark, fragrant night voices surging with passion sang Mexican songs and old Spanish melodies brought to the land many generations ago.

Conchita, even after a night's late dancing, used to mount her horse, like any simple cowboy, and ride out into the open. The women in the suburbs greeted her, crowding the thresholds of their low, white houses hung with red garlands. From a distance, these decorations seemed made of flamboyant roses from a fairy-land, only to prove at close range strings of red peppers—a year's crop of that terrible "chile" that tastes like a mouthful of caustic. Concha Ceballos would make the round of her father's estate. Alas, it kept growing smaller and smaller all the time, as did the flocks and herds upon it. Each year found the Ceballos fortune further reduced ; and such was the fate that befell all the ancient aristocracy of California.

Concha's grandfather had witnessed the revolution that wrought a first change throughout the

province: California had ceased to be Mexican and had become Spanish; but now it belonged to the United States.

But this change made little impression on the colonial gentry. They had always lived so far away from the Mexican Government that when independence came to Mexico, it was for them a change in name only. The Californians continued to live as they had lived before, sparsely scattered over a great area and keeping up the ancient spirit of the first Spanish colonists. To be sure, they preferred to belong to a nation of the same race; yet a change in allegiance never had seemed to them a matter of life and death. Twenty-five years before they had been officially classified as Mexicans instead of Spaniards. Now they were to live within the federation of the United States. That was all.

The fatal blow was coming to them from a different quarter. Gold was soon discovered in the province. The feverish news spread around the world. Adventurers and desperadoes from every land united to overrun in a crusade of plunder that peaceful corner of America. Combined with their desire for riches, they brought there the vices and rancours of all humanity. The saloons—a combination of tavern and hostelry seething with gamblers and women—sprang up all over the beautiful land, multiplying like parasites. Newcomers were attracted, men with callous hands, grown rich overnight and not knowing how to put their gold to its best use. Astute schemers went

from place to place trapping alike the unwary gold miner and the Californian landowner.

The dignified cattle-raisers of yesterday became passionate gamblers and at a dizzy speed lost their herds and lands. Of those who managed to keep aloof from the lure of cards, many succumbed to the temptation of gold-digging as if obeying an atavistic call in their blood—the blood of the Spaniards that had sought El Dorado. They mortgaged their possessions and invested in gold claims that never bore any gold except in the imagination of their owners. Like the newcomers from Europe, they longed to become millionaires at a single stroke.

The grandfather of Conchita was still a rich man, measured by the standards of that time, which usually meant thousands of head of cattle and broad reaches of land. But he lived long enough to see the Ceballos fortune shattered to its foundations. His son Gonzalo was nearly ruined; true to the gambling type, he was always in some mining scheme or other and embarking in every venture of this kind that offered. His daughter paid more attention than he did to the only landed property, burdened with many mortgages, that was left to them. The father's attention was absorbed entirely by the eternal dream of a gambler; a gold vein that will make a man rich beyond measure in the course of a few days.

However, the Californian golden era was passing. Alaskan gold had not been dreamed of yet; and Don Gonzalo Ceballos turned his eyes toward the

Mexican frontier. The remaining crumbs of his fortune were gathered and put into investigating and exploiting mines situated upon Mexican territory. The research was perfectly justified as far as indications on the geological maps were concerned. But the work had to be carried on in a very turbulent atmosphere. Indian bands revolted against innovations that threatened their primitive ways of living, and whites and half-breeds set up revolutions—a thing more dangerous yet.

During those last years of her father's inglorious career, Conchita met Engineer Balboa in Monterey.

She was fourteen. The man who came to see her father about some mines recently discovered across the frontier could not be more than twenty-five. When it comes to our later life, a difference of ten or twelve years may mean old age on one side and the prime of life on the other; but between young people it is no great consideration, and when the added years are on the man's side, it even gives him a secret fascination in the eyes of the woman.

"To think that this man was my first love!" she exclaimed inwardly when she saw him again at his house in Madrid.

Balboa was far from suspecting such thoughts on her part. If he could have read them he would have taken them for a joke, for the proud daughter of the Ceballos had never allowed him to guess her feelings at that distant period of their acquaintance, even though they had been powerful enough

to be remembered long afterwards. For the young foreigner with the reddish beard and blue eyes, gentle of speech and a little timid, had revived in the girl's mind the many things she had heard her parents tell about Spain and the Spaniards.

The Ceballos' used to talk in tones of awe about the lieutenants, captains, advocates, and officials of the Ministry of Royal Domains who would come from Spain to be engulfed by the silent spaces of California. From these tales one might imagine, to boot, that all these men were powerful and intimate friends of the Royal House of Spain. Then there were her half-breed nurses with their entrancing tales of witches, fairies, and wizards always working their magic in some ancient town of Spain. Before she learned English in the public school she had read a good deal in Spanish; and the books—old venerable volumes acquired by her grandfather—were either romantic novels or poetry that always harked back to the fatherland of Conchita's ancestors.

Ricardo Balboa was the first Spaniard she had met—and he instantly became to her the personification of all her admired novel heroes. His past could only enhance this romantic fascination. She knew his story and to her he was a wounded man who needed care and consolation. He was in mourning and looked sad. His wife had died in Mexico a short time before, and their only child, the remembrance of a short-lived romance, was also left there. An impulse of maternity was added to Conchita's girlish adoration when she

learned these facts. In her dreams she built up and gave new beauty to the existence of Engineer Balboa, and she admired herself for it. He, however, suspected nothing and left Monterey. Concha Ceballos was the only one who knew of her own one-sided romance of a few weeks' duration—a romance without words or events.

Her existence went on as before and each year that passed worked such changes in her thoughts and inclinations that when Balboa wrote to her father about business, his name no longer evoked any emotion in her. Once in a while she smiled condescendingly, recalling her "absurd and childish fancy." Other things and persons came to the foreground.

She was motherless, and presided over her father's house. Don Gonzalo, whose well-being became her chief concern, was like the last survival of a past era. His was all the bitterness of one who is irretrievably vanquished. "Haven't the *gringos* become the masters of the land?" he would ask. The true old Californians were rapidly becoming scarce—one could almost count them on the fingers of one hand. Children had changed, and they were now being educated in such ideas as indeed would make them anything but their parents' children.

Ceballos lifted his eyes to heaven, scandalized and annoyed, when, meeting young men called Villa, Perez, or Sepulveda, and addressing them in Spanish, he was answered in English!

There was not much left of the California gold.

The precious object, so poetical in its brilliancy and treachery, was being replaced by another product, dirty, fetid, infernal. Gold mines became less of an obsession; everyone was now in search of oil wells. . . .

Sadder than all this, however, was the fact that the rapidly changing stream of life carried away the last remainders of Don Gonzalo's wealth.

Conchita never shared her father's melancholy apprehensions. She had acquired the self-assurance characteristic of the single girl of New World countries where the women used to be less numerous than the men and were consequently so sought after that all they needed to do was to choose the suitor they liked best. Conchita, too, would marry no sooner than she wished.

"Miss Conchita Ceballos" was well-known throughout the territory of the ancient Missions. Some San Francisco papers published poems dedicated to her in which she was called "the star of Monterey." Among the blonde and clear-eyed Nordic women who now populated California, this dark beauty with her black eyes reflecting gold, tall, vigorous, and resolute, looked like the queen of a tribe. She was unusual, and yet there was nothing shockingly new in her, for she conformed to all the traditions of the country. Many admired her as the personified union of two racial types, Indian and Spanish. Moreover, she was a Ceballos, one of the very noble Californian families. In short, her beauty and descent suggested dreams of a flattering matrimonial alliance to more than

one of the newly rich gold miners and business men.

She refused a number of marriage proposals and let the years pass without making her choice. People began to judge her somewhat unwise: it was easy to miss the time altogether and remain an old maid for life! Others thought she was averse from matrimony because of her desire to stay with her father.

The truth of the matter was that Conchita did not really think of love. There was in her family the romantic example of Concha Argüelo, a relative of her mother, who lived to be thirty-seven all the while patiently waiting for the return of her betrothed, and who had died as a saint. But then, this woman of whose extraordinary fortitude she heard many awesome tales in her childhood, was a born martyr, and surely she must have longed for masculine support. Conchita was stronger; she could live alone and be sufficient unto herself. She never feared solitude and always appreciated the great advantage that goes with it, the fulness of liberty. She adopted man's exercises to satisfy her sense of independence. A skilled horse-woman from her childhood, as a growing girl she learned boxing and became an adept in jiu-jitsu. That was a sure way of keeping people in their places and of avoiding over-zealous attentions.

"I have never cried in my life," she used to declare with pride.

The day came, however, when the news spread

of her marriage to Mr. Douglas, a local politician of note, a quiet, robust man twenty-five years her senior—old enough to be her father. Nobody talked of romance in connection with this marriage. The respectable grey-haired gentleman with his kind and tolerant smile could not possibly cut the romantic figure seen in novels and plays. His quiet and considerate affection toward the young girl had much of a paternal attitude about it.

Conchita herself did not care to dissimulate the truth. "Is it really so necessary to be desperately in love?" she would say. She showed her husband respect and appreciation. Somehow or other, she made him satisfied with their life in common; and that was enough for conjugal happiness.

She made her home in Washington so as not to be separated from her husband, who was a Congressman. The young girl who used to gallop like a cowboy in the vicinity of Monterey adapted herself with perfect ease to the life of the Capital and to social intercourse with the wives of government officials. In fact, her discretion and tact added greatly to the prestige of Congressman Douglas. A man who had been an intimate friend of his was presently elected President of the United States, and so it happened that Conchita's husband was transferred to the diplomatic service. As he had received his education in California and spoke Spanish fluently, it was considered proper to send him as United States Minister to a South American capital. It was also believed that Mrs.

Douglas could be of great help to her husband in his new position because of her distinguished Spanish ancestry.

Three years of life in the distant little Republic brought to the Ambassadors an enviable reputation for elegance, beauty, and amiability, combined, however, with an absolute aversion from familiarity.

The young men of the capital, a temperamental and passionate lot much given to romantic illusions, were greatly fascinated by this beautiful woman at the side of an ageing husband. The more audacious tried some advances, suffered speedy reverses, and began to talk disparagingly of the lady whose charm they had been singing the day before. She was nothing, after all, but a Puritan unable to appreciate the fascination of a slight flirtation. At the first suggestion of intimacy in a social chat, this prim bourgeoisie assumed an attitude of haughty reserve.

Soon they discovered that her beauty, too, was nothing more than of their native belles. Think of coming from the United States and having a dark complexion, black eyes, and black hair! Why, she couldn't compare with the fair-haired women from Northern Europe, not even with the red-nosed wives of the diplomats!

While staying in New York on leave of absence, Mr. Douglas died suddenly of an illness contracted in his strenuous political campaigns. His widow found herself rich—much richer than she had thought herself during her husband's lifetime. Her fortune came from the most various sources:

railway and mining stocks, steel and oil shares, and even a controlling interest in a large newspaper.

Her father had died shortly after her marriage and she had to assume all the burden of administering her fortune. But the Ambassadors had a pliable mind which adapted itself with remarkable ease to new circumstances. She sold some interests, transferred some investments, leased her rights in the newspaper business, and put trusted persons in charge of her rents.

She went back to California with the popular title of Ambassador. People in every land instinctively connect the notion of diplomacy with that of ambassadorship, and any diplomatic envoy is an ambassador to the man in the street. The former political friends of the late Mr. Douglas formed the habit of speaking of him as Ambassador Douglas—something that could not but add prestige to their native state. His widow now inherited the "title."

As soon as she realized the extent of the independence that her fortune had brought her, Mrs. Douglas felt a deep interest in the destinies of her fellow-creatures. Purity of public morals and the succour of the innocent and the oppressed became her great concern. Soon she was seen in every one of the associations for the protection not only of the poor but of animals as well. She became a tireless fighter against vice and against alcoholism. Organizers of philanthropy and preachers of moral hygiene were always sure to enlist the

support of her strong, aggressive personality and to receive a substantial cheque in addition.

Before the great San Francisco earthquake had put the underground opium dens out of existence, in company with others equally fearless, she used to go on alarmingly dangerous excursions to the Chinese quarter, and even never hesitated to enter the disreputable taverns and music halls for sailors in the locality known as the Barbary Coast.

She had no children. Any suggestion of remarriage that was made to her met with cool and polite refusal. All her boundless, enthusiastic energy was now devoted to public welfare, and with her iron character bent on incessant activity, she became a veritable knight of virtue and justice.

"She is a Don Quixote," an old Professor in Los Angeles had said; "she cannot belie her race. Her Spanish ancestors' blood is in her veins."

Nevertheless, she could not help being a woman at heart and after a while her indomitable will relaxed. She grew indifferent to her philanthropies, and a time came when she broke away from them entirely, limiting herself to giving money and no longer giving her own self.

Old dreams called her once more. She remembered how, as a young girl, she used to drop into her lap the book she had been reading and dream for hours. The thrill of this remembrance was irresistible, and on a moment's impulse, she set out upon a long voyage through Europe.

In orthodox fashion, she made the round of all the most celebrated museums, the most luxurious.

hotels, the most famous ruins, the most expensive *couturiers*, all in one breath. She stayed true to the type of the ever-curious woman of leisure who reads at once the latest book, the catalogues of exhibitions, the fashion magazines, who revels in changing her dress many times a day, exhibiting her jewels, and grasping the latest ideas with record-breaking promptness, for is it not a triumph to drop nonchalantly to-day the phrase that is to become the craze of the vulgar to-morrow?

In the course of her travels she secured audiences with three Popes and interviews with every person that had at the time achieved celebrity, whether for a day or for a lifetime.

However, travelling without other company than that of a French maid soon became tedious. Evenings spent at the hotel without a social function or a theatre party, seemed interminable. On the other hand, in many European countries an elegant and handsome woman, going out alone is compelled to be on her defensive all the time since many men mistake her character and become importunate.

When Mr. Douglas died, it was a foregone conclusion that the widow would soon remarry. She was still young and must inevitably meet the one who was to awaken her sentiment after the years of quiet friendship with her first husband.

Whenever such suppositions were ventured in her presence, the Ambassadors became irritated. Love, and always love! Why in the world was she at any price to learn love and to submit to its

tyrannical sequence of felicity, jealousy, and all the rest? She renounced it all without regret. Love was indispensable for neurotics and insufficiently balanced people whose nervous systems craved dramatic conflicts. She wanted to be like the sounder majority of the human race who prefer quiet attachment and friendship to the torments of passion.

Besides, she resolved to be loyal to Douglas' memory. It was the duty of a woman who knew something nobler and stronger than love: gratitude. Her husband had given her wealth, and wealth meant much to her, for it assured personal independence. Wealth, to her, was an instrument of freedom, which she put above all else. She had been fortunate in meeting a kind, tolerant, and tactful companion who, besides having all these qualities, had taken care to assure her future independence and respectability. That was enough—taking chances another time would be foolish, for she had learned the male character.

The social position she occupied was precisely the one she preferred: that of a rich widow, independent and respected by all. It would be sheer madness to exchange all this for love that so often proves interesting in novels only.

The fact remained, however, that travelling alone was boresome. She remembered her friend Rina, the poor and humble girl companion and admirer whom brilliant and domineering women always possess. Rina's family was on very friendly terms with the Ceballos' in Monterey. Her grand-

father was from Chile and had come to California with the wave of gold-seekers. Conchita was still a child when Rina already was casting languorous eyes at all the young boys at Monterey who, she was persuaded, were ready to prostrate themselves in the dust before her, only disputing among themselves the honour of so doing. At the time Concha became a widow, doubly respected for her fortune and her name, Rina still acknowledged, sometimes with pride and sometimes with great discouragement, the fact that she was a maiden lady. There was a difference of about eight years between the two.

As she advanced in years, Rina became more sentimental and naïve, almost childish. Her attitude toward life was at once pedantic and somewhat timid. At times she was positively insolent in spite of her simplicity.

To the Ambassadors her friend soon became a habit. Full of glee one minute and shedding tears the next, Rina, with her quick alternations of laughter and melancholy, grew to be a necessity to the rich widow, as might a lap-dog now quiet, now barking.

There were moments when the Ambassadors felt tired of her travelling companion. At such times, the humble Rina seemed to disappear utterly although remaining materially present. It seemed that Nature had endowed her with the peculiar ability to contract and fold within herself so that her insignificant material form was all that remained of her presence.

Rina's sentimental hobby came back to her as they travelled from one hotel to the other where dancing went on day and night and elegant gentlemen would be introduced to them every now and then, for Mrs. Douglas' wealth and beauty enjoyed great popularity. Rina's thoughts were of love: love that was to be laid at her feet with choice expressions and gallant "ideal" gestures, just as in the many romances she devoured.

Life was so empty when no men were at hand! . . . It was an irony of fate, though, that never one of them when present paid any attention to her.

The Ambassadors, hostile as she was to any mention of men in connection with herself, relished Rina's amorous confidences and her efforts, and artifices, plans aimed at landing a husband from among all these indifferent and elusive men-folk.

Her lack of success needed explanation and she began comparing herself to her rich friend. Surely, if she only could dress as Concha did, men would also follow her! Little as there was of coquetry in her nature, she fairly beamed with joy and self-satisfaction whenever Concha Ceballos presented her with part of her own wardrobe or bought her something in the course of their fashion-hunting through the shops.

Mrs. Douglas, herself resplendent with beauty and health, was greatly entertained by watching Rina's extraordinary efforts to combat the evidence of advancing years, and the effect upon her of the unreciprocated ardour of her passion. She

seemed to be drying up and actually to be growing smaller. The largest part of the money she received from Concha went to the *Instituts de Beauté*.

Rina not only grew smaller, she seemed to grow younger and younger day by day. To be sure, it was a kind of youth so strange as to be disconcerting—something that made one think of a dweller on another planet. People whom she met at some fashionable hotel or other after a year's absence often failed to recognize her and re-established her identity only by associating her with her resplendent, never-changing friend. Concha was always herself, but Rina would leave a watering-place blonde one year to come back the next spring with black or auburn hair. Years of undivided passion had prematurely covered her face with wrinkles and so Rina was one of the first to avail herself of that miracle of surgery practised by specialists of London, Paris, and New York to rejuvenate actresses and society women: the "face-lifting" that gives back its girlish contour to a middle-aged face by pulling up the skin.

Rina was enthusiastic beyond measure over this wonderful operation. She underwent it repeatedly, as a matter of course, exhibiting such heroic coolness and endurance as is possible only to a woman in pursuit of beauty. She hardly let a single year pass without having her skin slightly cut at the edge of the scalp and her face pulled taut in one or another direction. For hours at a time she scrutinized her face in the mirror with the eye of

an expert. Then she decided just where to have the next incision made.

After a number of such facial operations she looked a different being from the rest of human-kind, and if within the limits of our planet any basis of comparison could be found for her, she reminded one of a woman of the yellow races of Asia by the tightness of the skin over her cheekbones and her elongated Japanese-like eyelids pulled lengthwise so much that they almost closed. A special arrangement of the hair was of course necessary to conceal the numerous scalp incisions, and so Rina had her forehead covered with a mass of curls while two thick puffs adorned each temple.

"Here," the Ambassadors would say, handing her another cheque, "I suppose you want another 'face-lifting'." And Rina, all gratitude for Concha and pity for herself, would shed abundant tears.

"You know well, Conchita, that I could have been rich if that bad man hadn't been pocketing my money all along. I do wish I could recover my own so as not to accept your sacrifices any longer."

To put it plainly, her desire to become less of a financial burden to Concha was a very secondary thought in Rina's mind. Her imprecations against "that bad man" and her longing for riches had another explanation: she was convinced that her poverty deprived her of a last chance to discontinue her unwelcome state of celibacy.

"When I lived in Monterey and was a young girl, I knew the men were all crazy, simply crazy,

about me. Naturally, because papa was still living, and engaged in that mining, you know, and was going to get rich. To think that the whole world believes I'm as poor as a church mouse, and nobody ever suspects that that Engineer Balboa, that dishonest man in Madrid, is in possession of my lawful inheritance and never sends me a cent of it ! ”

At first, the rich widow listened to all this with but one ear, but by dint of constant repetition at last she became interested in the misdeeds of the “bad man” in question.

There was a time, back in America, when she had made it her task to intervene in behalf of justice, and she was still giving money to help the oppressed. Why shouldn't she try to protect this old maiden whose babble and vagaries relieved her solitude ?

With implicit faith in Rina's side of the story about the absent Engineer Balboa's behaviour, she dictated a series of short and terse letters to this man who lived in Madrid enjoying a fortune which rightfully belonged to a poor single woman. Her principle in business matters was to be accurate above all else, and soon she was so perfectly at home in the whole affair as to be able to correct some misstatements of details on Rina's part.

It appeared that Rina's father, a Californian who called himself Juan Brown Sanchez—Sanchez after his father, the Chilean, and Brown after his mother, had gone into partnership with Ricardo Balboa during the latter's stay in Monterey, to

exploit silver mines in Mexico. Don Gonzalo, Concha's father, intended to enter the association, but finally had desisted because the enterprise, as so often happened in combinations promoted by Balboa, lacked sufficient capital.

"So there were three of them," continued Rina, "that bad man—he was at the head of the whole thing; and a gentleman who is now in Mexico where those mines are, and papa. When papa died, the two of them struck up an agreement and as they form a majority they never consult me or send me a cent. They know I am a poor orphan alone in the world!—and so they rob me as they please."

The Ambassadors ceased dictating letters to Rina, finding it quicker and more effective to write directly to Balboa. She began to find a special delight in occupying herself with this matter that did not concern her personally, and she thought her pleasure came purely from the satisfaction of helping a poor friend in distress, yet very deep in her soul—so deep as to be subconscious—lay a spite against the man who, crossing her path so long ago, had awakened her heart and then had continued along his own path, ignorant of what he was leaving behind. Through an obscure inner process of almost a lifetime, the fondness of years ago had turned to enmity.

The cool and polite answers Balboa sent her from Madrid irritated her more than ever. It seemed to her that she read between the lines what he would like to say to her if he dared: "Madam,

you are interfering with things that are none of your concern and that you cannot understand. This is a man's business."

Balboa was to her a true European—or more exactly a Latin type—one of those men who cannot comprehend woman's superiority in anything but the art of dress and in seductive wiles, and who deny her any part whatever in public affairs.

"I'll settle your account with him," she said to Rina with threatening emphasis. "This man does not know me. He thinks I'm still the child he knew in Monterey. We shall go to Madrid if necessary."

And to tell the truth, she longed for such a necessity. Her life in Paris had become uncomfortable for her. Two men of ardent matrimonial ambitions interfered with her liberty. One had followed her from America—timid, good-natured, and yet persistent; his tactics consisted in silently putting himself in her way wherever she went. The other, a bolder sort, insisted on escorting her everywhere, waiting his chance to compromise her reputation or, better still, to overcome her resistance. To escape these assailants of her peaceful widowhood, to throw them off her track, and to enjoy her independence again, became her one desire.

By this time she had written the "bad man" a number of letters, each more cutting than the one before. With a hostile lack of understanding, she disregarded his explanations and pleadings; and one fine morning, hardly out of bed, she announced

to her companion that they were leaving the next day for Madrid.

"I have dreamed of Madrid," she declared. "I feel like looking over the Velásquez gallery once again. I want to see the mantillas, the high combs, the capes, and the dancing gitanas. And why shouldn't we go? We'll be a nice surprise party to your 'bad man.' And I tell you that I'm going to settle the thing right then and there, and you will have money before you know it."

She gave a few weeks' vacation to her French maid so that the girl might visit her people. And now there they were, sitting in the workroom-parlour of Engineer Balboa, and facing him at his draughting table.

There was an exchange of greetings and a very brief reference to Monterey and the time when they first met. Then, with a coolly aggressive air, Engineer Balboa himself began to speak of the business that caused the ladies' visit. He was now borne as on wings by that feeling of indignation which is the courage of the timid. Such people tremble in anticipation of a disagreeable thing, but when it comes, they look it squarely in the face and lose all fear—for the uncertain and mysterious have been left behind.

He now saw before him, in the flesh, the lady who for the last months had been writing him harsh letters treating him almost as a thief. He knew one thing: he was going to tell her a few plain truths. . . . And with the air of tolerance of one who is explaining something to a person of

her with those silly tales and made her commit an injustice ?

“Don’t you think,” she said in a very sweet voice, “that this reading might take too long just now ? We would do better to go through these papers at leisure whenever your son would be kind enough to bring them to our hotel.”

She smiled still more amiably and added in a thoroughly cordial manner :

“Let’s change to a pleasanter subject. After all, persons of mutual good-will cannot but agree ; and we aren’t intent on devouring each other, are we ? Let’s remember something of those old times in California when all of us first knew each other. What a lot of things have happened since !”

CHAPTER III

Explaining who Queen Calafia was, and how she ruled over her island of California.

AT nine o'clock in the evening the whole Mascaro family, Don Antonio, his wife, and his daughter, appeared at the Balboa home, and the conversation immediately turned on the visit of Concha Ceballos.

Engineer Balboa felt victorious and proud over the fact that he and the Ambassadors had parted in such a perfectly amiable manner after all her threatening letters and her hostile and taciturn appearance that noon.

"It is just a question of being firm in talking to these ladies of aggressive character," he added, emphatically. "Show them you're not afraid of them, that's the thing. Apart from all this, of course, she is a very charming woman."

The Professor fully agreed with his friend.

"I think of her," he said, "as magnanimous and kind like the Queen Calafia, whose story, by the way, I have been reading over again this afternoon."

was the son of Amadis de Gaula. According to the custom prevailing among the Knights-errant, he had a surname. As Don Quixote de la Mancha had accepted the name of Knight of the Rueful Countenance, so Esplandian is sometimes referred to by Montalvo as the Knight of the Great Serpent, or as Caballero Serpentino."

As he spoke, Mascaro had before his eyes the picture of the old romance writer of Medina del Campo, with the austere and barren Castilian landscape for a setting, a rocky plateau with scarcely a stream to be found upon it, bitter cold or scorching hot according to the season. With the powerful imagination of a born writer, Montalvo endowed this wilderness with wonderful scenery amid which were unrolled the most extraordinary happenings.

"When Montalvo was still a youth," Don Antonio took up his story again, "Christianity had suffered the unforgettable blow of losing Constantinople to the Turks; but now he was filled with the joy of a true creator of romance who fancies events not as they actually happened, but as they should have happened to be in accord with his own inspiration. Thus he had devoted the last part of *Las Sergas de Esplandian* to the description of a grand siege of old Byzantium by countless tribes of Asia. It told how the Knight of the Great Serpent and his father Amadis came to the assistance of the Christian Emperor and put to flight the terrible hordes that had united against the Almighty God.

“A certain monarch, Radiaro of Lycia, a powerful warrior, and the leader and main reliance of the infidel forces together with the King of Halapa and other fierce Moslem rulers and persecutors of Christianity, began their joint assault on Constantinople. All the magnates of that mysterious Asia imagined by the romancer of Medina del Campo, rallied under the banners of Radiaro. In vain, however, did they throw their swarming hordes against the walls of Constantinople; for Amadis de Gaula, who by virtue of his exploits had become King of Great Britain, allied himself with King Lisuarte, King Perion, and other fabulous rulers of no less noble names, and took upon himself the defence of Byzantium.

“The monarchs of Lycia and of Halapa were already beginning to be doubtful of their success when a new and powerful ally joined them whose valiant army was large enough to reverse the fortunes of the campaign.

“At this place Montalvo, the romancer, describes in minute detail the situation of an island called California, ‘on the right hand of the Indies and in close vicinity to the Paradise on Earth,’ where the population consisted entirely of women. They had a slightly dark skin, tolerated no men in their midst, and lived much like the Amazons of antiquity.

“They had splendid strong bodies and valiant hearts. Their island abounding in steep, inaccessible heights was like no other country in the world. The arms they bore were all made of gold as were

the trappings of the superb beasts that they tamed and used for mounts. There was no other metal in the country besides gold. The Amazons dwelt in spacious and comfortable caves and had many boats in which they would go out on their raids, bringing home men prisoners whom they shortly afterward killed."

Upon reaching this point, the scholar looked somewhat doubtfully in the direction of his wife and Consuelito. He did not dare, in his daughter's presence, to repeat the exact words of the old romancer on this subject. But the young girl, although apparently listening to her father, was wholly engaged in gazing upon Florestan, begging him with her eyes to pay more attention to her than to the story.

Don Antonio substituted a few winks for more explicit information, and went on :

"Whenever, as a consequence of these men-hunting expeditions, the valiant Californians were blessed with motherhood, they kept girl infants, but immediately killed the males. In this way they avoided an increase of their male population ; the men who were not yet despatched at any one time were so few that the Amazons never ran the risk of being subjected to their domination.

"Because of the rocky character of the land, there lived a great many griffins in California."

Here Don Antonio thought it proper to give some explanation. Already Doña Amparo was looking at him questioningly and asking :

"What are those griffins ?"

"The poets of antiquity and the Middle Ages," replied Don Antonio, "had a great deal to say about this fabulous animal, although nobody had ever seen one. Its body was that of a lion, its head and wings were like those of an eagle, but it had horse's ears and a mane of fish scales. The feathers on its sides and wings were as hard as steel. The animal came originally from India, but it had a strange love of gold and always built its nest in auriferous localities.

"It was for this reason that antique lore assigned the griffins a dwelling-place near the temples whose rich treasures they were supposed to guard.

"Many Christians who had journeyed to Oriental lands during the Middle Ages and who had a predisposition toward marvels, reported they had seen, among other things, the griffin-bird. They testified that its proportions were larger than those of eight lions taken together and that it was capable of lifting up in the air a bull or a horse. The claws on its feet were of a very precious substance that could be used to manufacture costly objects; while bows and arrows made with its feathers were invincible weapons. The female griffin, instead of laying eggs, every once in a while deposited silver bullion in her nest. There had been in the treasury of King Carlos V. a famous cup that was claimed to have been made of a griffin's claw until it was discovered that the substance was nothing more than a rhinoceros' horn.

"When it was known that the griffins had young in their nests, the Californian Amazons, putting

and swords; but the griffins' feathers were so thick and so hard no weapon could as much as reach their skin.

"The Turks, peering out of their hiding-places, saw the powerful winged things soaring high in the air, each one with a Christian in its claw or its beak; and they shouted with joy so that the skies trembled. The defenders of Constantinople groaned with helpless wrath as they beheld their friends and brothers being snatched up into the air and devoured. When the monsters could eat no more, they began dropping their victims into the sea or to the ground. They returned to the city walls, again and again to get more men and finally spread such terror among the Christians that the defenders fled from the walls and hid in the interior of the city. The few who remained took refuge within the turrets.

"When she saw this, Queen Calafia shouted to the infidel leaders that they could now send their troops on to take the city. The infidels ran out of their hiding-places and putting a great many ladders to the walls, scaled them; but the griffins, having already flung to destruction all the Christians they could seize, pounced now upon the Turks who were to them just men like any others. These, too, they bore up to the clouds and let them also fall to death causing great losses in the infidel ranks.

"Rejoicing ceased among the assailants and soon changed into complete disorder. Instead of fighting the defenders of the city, they had to defend them-

selves from Calafia's horrible griffins. Seeing how things stood, the Christians emerged from their hiding-places and turrets and killed great numbers of infidels by throwing them down from the walls. Then, seeing that the griffins were coming back for more victims, they ran away again.

"Queen Calafia felt very sad over the mistaken tactics of her beasts who refused to distinguish between her allies and her enemies and attacked anyone that looked like a man. She advised the chiefs to call a retreat and ordered her Californians to attack the city alone, for the griffins would not touch them. The Amazons jumped upon their fierce mounts and advanced toward the walls. They wore on the breast an armour of fish bones, so tough that no weapon could pierce it. Legs, arms, and trunk were enclosed by armour of gold.

"The agile Amazons climbed the ladders in the twinkling of an eye and bravely attacked the soldiers in the turrets. But the latter knew how to take advantage of the narrow loop-holes and defended themselves desperately while those who were in the streets below rained arrows and javelins upon the women. They aimed at their sides and wounded many, for gold was not of much use as an armour. All the while griffins soared idly above the combatants, not seeing any males whom they could seize.

"Calafia now thought that the Turks should come to the assistance of her warriors, and said to the two monarchs :

"Send your men ahead. Have no fear. My

birds never disobey their mistresses, and so you will be protected from them.'

"But alas, as soon as the griffins saw more men climbing the ladders, they threw themselves upon them ravenously, as if they had not eaten for two days. In vain did the brave Californians strike them with their golden swords. The blood-thirsty creatures seized Turks from their very midst and lifting them to enormous height let them fall to their death.

"The consternation of the infidels was so great that they left the walls much quicker than they had climbed them and scurried back to their camps. Calafia then saw that she could not prevent the disastrous attacks of her griffins. She summoned those from among her subjects who had charge of them so that they might recall them and put them back in their cage. These caretakers climbed upon the grated boat and called out to the griffins in their own language; the ferocious birds, as docile as though they were human beings, answered the call and allowed themselves to be put into captivity again.

"Montalvo, the romancer, whose knowledge of all the details of this siege should not be doubted, for the story was handed down to him by both the old wizard Urganda la Desconocida and the eminent Maestro Elisabat, continued his tale of the bloody fights which took place daily before the walls of Constantinople. The Emperor himself, with his 'ten thousand choice horsemen' came to lend a hand wherever his army was in greatest

peril ; and Queen Calafia and her women were the most to be dreaded. The indefatigable Queen would hurl herself upon the enemy, spear in hand ; this was an irresistible weapon, but it finally broke, for there was no limit to the number of enemies to be killed with it. She then seized her sword which was much like a knife with a very wide blade, and struck down hundreds of Christian knights, wounding severely those she did not kill. She threw herself into the very thick of the fray with such warlike ardour that the foe could hardly believe she was a woman. Noble paladins eagerly sought an encounter with her, considering it the greatest glory they could win in battle.

“At times her assailants became so many and the blows were so severe that she believed her last hour had come. But then her sister Liota would rush to her rescue like a furious lioness and deliver her from the caballeros who were raining blows upon her beautiful head.

“The infidel rulers presently got tired of this fruitless siege and resorted to a measure quite usual in mediæval warfare and often mentioned in romances of chivalry.

“The ruler of Lycia and Queen Calafia had learned that Amadis de Gaula and his son Esplandian were among the defenders ; and so they sent to these knights a message challenging them to fight single-handed with the two of them on condition that the vanquished would unconditionally surrender to the victors.

“This message was carried to the city by a

beautiful dark-skinned and richly adorned Californian riding on a ferocious beast. The two knights accepted the challenge and the handsome messenger returned to her camp with no end of tales about the ravishing beauty of the Caballero Serpentino, whom she had seen standing at the throne of his father Amadis de Gaula.

“ ‘I swear to you, Lady Queen, that there never has been another youth of such shining beauty, neither will there be again,’ she said; ‘if he had been of our faith I would think that our gods had moulded him with their own hands.’

“ Queen Calafia was quite moved by these words and decided to go to the city and see with her own eyes the two paladins with whom she and Radiaro were to fight. All night long, while resting in her boat, she considered whether she would go to Constantinople armed or unarmed—and decided that she would go in feminine garb, for this would speak for her honest intentions.

“ She arose at daybreak and attendants brought her magnificent shawls of gold cloth adorned with precious stones. She dressed in these and wound another shawl like a turban around her head. This was also of gold, with rare stones. Then they brought her a beast to ride upon—the most extraordinary beast ever known in the world.”

Professor Mascaro gathered his thoughts so as to give his audience the picture of the strange animal as described by the Castilian writer.

“ It had ears like two shields, and a broad forehead with a single eye upon it that shone like a

mirror. Its nostrils were very large, but its face was short and obtuse so that it had no snout. Two fangs, each one a foot long, protruded upward from its mouth. Its coat was yellow with purple dots the size of a gold coin. It was larger than a dromedary and its feet had hoofs like those of a bull. It was swift as the wind ; also, it stepped as lightly as a mountain goat over the most dangerous rocky paths. It fed on dates, figs, and raisins, and had a beautifully slender body.

“The handsome Queen mounted her beast. Two thousand women escorted her, wrapped in magnificent shawls and riding unusual animals. Immediately surrounding the Queen, twenty maids, also richly clad, walked and held their sovereign’s train which was more than eight yards long.

“In this manner she reached the appointed place where the Christian monarchs were waiting for her ; and the moment she saw Esplandian near the thrones of his father Amadis and his grandfather Lisuarte, she said to herself :

“ ‘ O gods ! What is this ? Truly, there never was beauty like this in the world ! ’

“And as his serene eyes rested upon her face, she felt her heart pierced by love for the young prince.

“She had never been conquered in battle, but in the presence of this handsome paladin she felt weak and shaking as if she had been struck with an iron mallet. No, she could not fight with him. She would not have strength enough to strike his youthful face. She might as well acknowledge herself defeated. No, she would let the valiant

Radiaro of Lycia fight with the Knight of the Great Serpent. The Queen of California would herself measure arms with the noble Amadis.

"The celebrated encounter of the four heroes took place the following day. Amadis and Calafia sprang at each other with such impetus that they instantly broke their spears; upon which the great Amadis limited his fighting to defence with the broken stub of his weapon.

"'Dost thou think so little of my strength that thou thinkest to conquer me thus?' Calafia protested.

"'Illustrious Queen,' answered Amadis, 'my purpose in this life is to serve and protect women. If I were to arm myself against thee who art a woman, I should well deserve to have all my past exploits consigned to oblivion.'

"Such speech only infuriated the valiant Amazon who wanted to be treated as an equal. She raised her broadsword with both hands and dealt terrible blows to Amadis. But he finally succeeded, with only his broken spear for a weapon, in throwing her to the ground and making her acknowledge herself conquered. At the same time Esplandian beat his infidel adversary and took him prisoner.

"After this double defeat, the war was ended and the siege lifted. Calafia was glad of her defeat for it enabled her to live near the Caballero Serpentino and to see him often. To use the expression of Montalvo, she was doubly captive: her body was in bonds and her heart fell victim to the beauty of Esplandian.

"Being the great sovereign that she was, ruler of a people and of a land that abounded in gold and precious stones as no other country in the world, it must not be wondered at that she began to think of taking in marriage the son of Amadis de Gaula. She had even reached the decision of becoming a Christian to facilitate such a union. But Esplandian had loved for years the gentle Leonorina, daughter of the Byzantine Emperor who, together with his wife, abdicated upon the deliverance of Byzantium from the infidels and went to live in a cloister.

"The Knight of the Great Serpent married Leonorina and became Emperor of Byzantium; and Queen Calafia, once the terror of the battle-fields, was now but a poor broken-hearted woman.

"She did not want to return to her Californian domains. Eventually, bringing her brilliant career to an inglorious conclusion, Calafia married a kinsman of Esplandian in order that she might continue to live near the renowned Caballero Serpentino.

"This novel," Don Antonio concluded, "was first published in 1510, although written as early as 1492, when the Most Catholic King and Queen of Spain took Granada and when Columbus, aided by the brothers Pinzon, began to prepare for his first voyage of discovery. All this goes to prove that the name California was invented by the Castilian novelist before the Spanish ships had first touched the islands of what was to be known as America."

For a century and a half, the so-called romances of chivalry were the favourite reading of all Christians. In Spain these novels were eagerly sought by both men at arms and civilians. The incredible adventures therein described constantly fed the enthusiasm of a nation of soldiers and navigators who saw a whole unexplored world open itself to their adventurous initiative, and eagerly sought an opportunity to carry out in life the things about which they had read.

The novel of Cervantes, which dealt a mortal blow to the romances of chivalry, was not published until a hundred years after the appearance of *Las Sergas de Esplandian*. The Spanish *conquistadores* who penetrated into America were among the most ardent readers of these novels. In fact, their undeserved popularity was so great in the so-called West Indies, that King Carlos V. prohibited their importation there as "pernicious literature."

Spaniards recently domiciled in the New World were constantly prompted by a desire to repeat in those distant lands the exploits of their favourite heroes. Every day they lived in expectation of finding enchanted cities and untold treasures. The least little Indian chief looked to them a great emperor.

When Hernando Cortes subdued the central Mexican plateau and reached the rivers of the Pacific slope, he felt the fascination of this ocean which Nunez de Balboa had first seen from the coast of Panama.

Much of the riches acquired by Cortes in his victorious adventures were spent in his frequent sailing expeditions upon the Pacific. He established whole arsenals along the shore of the mysterious ocean which was at that time called the "Southern Sea." He sent to Spain for ship-building materials which were unloaded in Vera Cruz and then hauled across immense plateaus and mountain ranges to the western shore of Mexico. With these materials and from timber felled on the spot he built the first large ships constructed upon the American continent, and these he dedicated to the exploration of unknown seas.

The navigators sent northward by Cortes thought at one time that they had discovered a very large island in what is now called Lower California. The first discoverer of the "island," pilot Fortuno Jimenez, and most of his companions, met a tragic death at the hands of Indians.

More voyages were undertaken to the sea which was then called "Pearl Gulf," the "Bosom of California," and the "Sea of Cortes," until finally the navigators became convinced that it was not a strait, and that the island which had been first baptized with the name of Santa Cruz, was in reality a peninsula. Hernando Cortes himself sailed with a hundred men from the western coast of Mexico in order to investigate the mysterious island, and Cortes was the one who finally gave that land its present name.

The novel of Montalvo, which he had written as

a sequel to *Amadis de Gaula*, had an enormous success. A volume of the *Sergas de Esplandian* was sure to be found among the possessions of the crew of every Spanish ship that set out over the unknown seas. Hernando Cortes, a former student at the University of Salamanca, was extremely fond of reading novels, and knew how to write verses when the occasion demanded. He found a sea rich in pearls, a coast bearing great treasures of gold, if the natives were to be believed, and from his ship's deck he no doubt saw tall, splendid Indian women armed with bows and javelins like Amazons. This was enough to make him think of Queen Calafia; and he gave the island of Santa Cruz—which had ceased to be an island—the name of the legendary domain of the enamoured Amazon Queen. So it came about that the Mexican Lower California of to-day came to receive the name of California, a name which was then passed on to be applied to all of the adjoining country to the north which later became the State of California.

"Thus it happened," Don Antonio said, "that sometime before the discovery of America the name of California was invented by a novelist living upon the central *mesa* of Spain, a veteran of many wars but probably a man who never saw the sea with his own eyes."

CHAPTER IV

*In which the story of California is continued. The
Tale of the Saint of the Castanets.*

MASCARO continued his story.

“The Spaniards delayed two centuries in colonizing Upper California, after having put it on the map. They were seeking for gold and precious stones, neither more nor less than all the explorers of their time, of every nationality. Their voyages were interminable, they sailed in such small barques and were so ill-acquainted with the coasts and the winds. It is absurd, therefore, to think that they should have gone in search of vulgar articles of commerce. These did not begin to be transported from one hemisphere to another until the modern advances in navigation, when ships had become enormous. If the discoverers risked their lives, they risked them in the hope of getting rich quick, of loading their small ships with objects of great value and small volume, as are the precious metals.

“The French and English navigators of the time, who were not able to seek gold in lands that belonged to the Spaniards by right of discovery,

devoted themselves to the sack of the struggling colonies in America, which they could pillage easily enough, or to stealing the cargoes of ships returning to Europe.

"To possess gold was the one desire of the people of that time (if indeed it is not that of the people of to-day) and it would be an absurdity to try to judge their actions fairly by the sentiments and conventions of our epoch. If the Spanish were hated in those times, that was natural enough; they were the owners of the lands of gold: of course, they were envied by the others."

The Professor spoke of the expeditions which set out from Mexico in search of the fabulous Six Cities of Cibola and of the mythical queen of Quivira. The conqueror Coronado thought he had found the cities of gold in what to-day are the States of New Mexico and Arizona, adjoining California.

A brave pilot, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, by order of the Viceroy of Mexico, sailed along the shore of the Pacific toward the north. He it was who discovered the coast-line of Upper California and who was the first white man to set foot on its soil. In this laborious navigation he anchored very near the Golden Gate, which is the entrance to the Bay of San Francisco. But he did not discover it; nor had he the least knowledge of such a safe refuge.

Cabrillo died in the midst of his exploration and was buried by his men on the Californian coast. His lieutenant, Ferrelo, went on navigating toward

the north, but the lack of food supplies made him return to Mexico in 1543. He had explored the entire coast of present-day California, but without finding San Francisco Bay.

"Thirty-six years later," continued Mascaro, "the famous pirate Drake, who had reached the Pacific by way of the Straits of Magellan, in the hope of pillaging several of the growing Spanish colonies, set out towards the north; he thus was the second to visit the Californian coast. He stopped for repairs at an anchorage not so many miles from San Francisco Bay, but failed to notice that wonderful body of water; he sailed west across the Pacific and finally completed his trip around the world. It was not extraordinary that Spain had forgotten this coast after having discovered it. Her colonial empire was so extensive, that to-day it seems remarkable that she was able to govern it at all, however badly, and to people it with white men from such a distance, when she had to struggle with the enormous obstacles of distance and the difficulties of navigation in those days.

"At last the King of Spain was forcibly reminded of the forgotten California, and obliged to seek it out again, not with the hope of finding gold, but in order to establish a point of communication with the Asiatic archipelagos.

"Magellan had discovered the Philippine Islands, and just as the principal motive of the voyages of Columbus was to make a new commercial route to the spice-growing East Indies, Spain turned the

Philippine archipelago into a warehouse for Asiatic products. The fleets which came to take them on the first lap of their journey to the Occident set out for Manila from the Mexican port of Acapulco and returned to the same port on the way back.

"On this return trip, the expeditions always travelled in the Northern Hemisphere; the winds drew them opposite the coast of California, after which they made their course toward the south. The Spanish merchant marine needed a port on this coast for refuge, a place where they could make the repairs which were necessary after the enormous trip across the Pacific. But the explorers sent by the Viceroy of Mexico sought this port without finding it.

"It was the irony of fate," continued Don Antonio, "that all the explorations of the coast of California were made with the object of finding a safe port, and although such a port existed in San Francisco Bay, which is one of the largest in the world, no voyager came across it during two centuries, many as were those who passed and repassed before its mouth. . . . And when at last San Francisco Bay was found, the discovery was made by land, by a captain of cavalry.

"The pilot Vizcaíno, commissioned by the Count of Monterey, went in search of a port of refuge in California, after his colleagues Gali and Cermeno had made similar explorations. He gave the names they carry to-day to many capes, isles, and rivers of the coast which he called after Spanish saints. Finally, he thought he had found the

desired port in an open anchoring ground which he called Monterey, in honour of the governor who had organized his expedition.

"Voyaging then toward the north, he came within a few miles of San Francisco Bay, and yet he again failed to discover it. . . . Fogs on some occasions and unlucky mishaps on others prevented his barques from ever seeing its entrance, because it remained below the line of the horizon. When Drake changed his course within thirty miles of the Golden Gate, he could have discovered this enormous bay simply by sending one of his mariners to the top of some peak on the coast. But a mysterious influence seemed to mock at the seamen, reserving this important discovery for a soldier of the land who made it without having desired to do so.

"During a hundred and sixty years, Spain, with such vast and rich territories to rule, did not concern herself with the abandoned and silent California. The vessels which returned from the Philippines limited themselves to touching at Cape Mendocino, a point far up the California coast-line, from there continuing toward Acapulco, the final terminus of their voyage.

"But England had founded her colonies on the American coast of the Atlantic, France occupied the Mississippi, and the Russian exploration was descending the Pacific coast from the north. Behring, passing through the straits which bear his name, had established himself in Alaska, bringing into being a Russian America. The

Empire of the Tsars desired its part of the New World. Russia was not satisfied with the lands she now owned in America, which were buried under snow the greater part of the year, consequently she was advancing little by little, drawn by the splendours of tropical America ; and she did not propose to stop before reaching the Mexican frontier.

“ Spain realized that Upper California was Spanish geographically ; to hold it safe, she would have to occupy and colonize it.

“ This was in the time of Carlos III.,” the Professor went on to say, “ when a group of illustrious Spaniards renewed the energy and the culture of the country, modernizing its laws and customs. Then appeared the Gálvez’, that light-haired family of great Americans. The principal member of this family, the one who founded its prosperity and served as aid to the others, was a labourer’s son, Don José de Gálvez, who had become a lawyer of Vélez Málaga. Then began civil movement which ended in producing the French Revolution. From Paris the Encyclopedists influenced the thought of the whole continent. Writers began to govern the people, taking the place of men of the sword and of the ancient nobility. The profession of lawyer led easily to the position of the king’s counsellor. Don José de Gálvez actually had such a career ; from being a plain lawyer in Madrid, he came to be the American Minister of the King of Spain.

“ He made his brother, Don Matías, Governor of

Guatemala. Don Matías de Gálvez was a simple man, impartial and just ; such a man was rare in the colonial administration. He then gave the governorship of Louisiana, which Spain had recovered a few years before by an agreement with France, to this man's son, called Don Bernardo de Gálvez, a young soldier, who had obtained the rank of brigadier-general by his bravery in European wars.

"This Don Bernardo de Gálvez, a commander who by his youth and his victories recalls the generals of the French Revolution, is a hero unjustly forgotten by the United States, perhaps because he was Spanish. There is not a child in the schools of America who does not know the name of Lafayette ; on the other hand, I can safely wager that among the one hundred and twenty million people in the United States there probably do not exist twenty who can tell you who Don Bernardo de Gálvez was."

And Mascaro related rapidly the campaigns and triumphs of this twenty-three year old general.

"Spain, allied with France, openly favoured the American colonies who were revolting against England to obtain their independence. The port of Havana served as a base and refuge for the French and Spanish squadrons which, giving battle to the British ships and surprising their convoys, in this way aided on the sea the new states of America. Don Bernardo de Gálvez, Governor of Louisiana, lived in New Orleans ; he followed the

orders of the government at Madrid and waged war on the English who occupied Florida.

"His father, Don Matías de Gálvez, ruler of Guatemala, had fought them in Honduras with the scanty means he had at his disposition, gathering together a small band of negroes, Indians, and white adventurers. He did so much with this army that, in spite of his being a civil officer, the Spanish Government gave him the rank of General.

"His son, the young Governor of Louisiana, showed an extraordinary military capacity. With another army, hastily flung together, in which there were only two hundred Spanish veterans, he went out from New Orleans to aid the Americans, who were being harassed and attacked by the British forces. He took several Florida forts by surprise, and immediately transporting his artillery on barges up the Mississippi, he laid siege to Baton Rouge, obliging its garrison to surrender. In a little while he mastered the territory of the Choctaw Indians, whose chieftains respected the young conqueror, and joined him in order to combat the English.

"The following year, 1780, he carried the war to western Florida, setting out from Havana, which served as a base for his operations, with an army of soldiers who had come from Spain. After having great difficulty in landing, he overpowered the city of Mobile and then took Pensacola, which was the capital of Florida under the English rule.

"In this victory Gálvez was wounded in the stomach and in the chest, but his youth and his

vigour saved his life. The government at Madrid made him general of a division, giving him besides the title of Count for his victories. At the time, several poems were written in honour of this commander, but to-day there is no one who remembers this twenty-three year old general who drove the English out of Florida during the War of Independence, and aided the triumph of the Americans with his campaigns. In all the immense Republic of the Union, where there are so many monuments to the glory of persons very often forgotten, there exists not a statue or a simple bust to call up the memory of the Count of Gálvez, conqueror of Mobile and Pensacola.

“His father Don Matías became Viceroy of Mexico. He was loved for the simplicity of his life and the uprightness of his administration. But a fatal influence seemed to bear down upon the Gálvez’ of America, sustained from Madrid by the lawyer, minister of the Indies. Don Matías died in Mexico before he had finished out a year as Viceroy, and his son, the general, was named to succeed him. The Mexican people received the warrior with enthusiasm. He was the youngest of their Viceroys and had the prestige of his military victories. Besides, he lived simply, like a soldier, showing himself in public without a body-guard, talking with the most humble people at the popular *fiestas*. But he, like his father, died the year he became Viceroy, from a rapid and mysterious sickness which consumed him in a few days. And as this was inexplicable in a young and vigorous

man, the people began to say that he had died of poisoning. . . .

"But let us return to the lawyer, Gálvez, the chief of that family of *Americanistas*. Before reaching the ministry of the colonies, Don José de Gálvez had been sent to Mexico (which was then called New Spain) with the title of *Visitador*, in order to examine at first hand into the means of peopling and civilizing the north of the Spanish dominions, and stopping the Russian advance. The *Visitador* established himself in the port of San Blas, opposite Lower California, personally preparing for the second exploration of Upper California and its definite colonization. In order that this colonization should have a firm base, a port was essential," and again the Professor spoke of Monterey, the bay forgotten for a century and a half, after the old Captain Vizcaíno had discovered it. "A legendary memory of Monterey remained in Mexico. Vizcaíno and his men, impressed by the abundance and variety of the wild animals that could be hunted in the surrounding woods, had tried to return to this anchoring-place in order to establish a colony there. But the navigator died before the royal authorization came from Spain. The civilization of the country was thus retarded one hundred and sixty years.

"The *Visitador* found it necessary to seek the port of Monterey by land. Two boats constructed by Gálvez on the coast of Sonora, sailing northward, were to meet the land expedition at this anchoring-place.

"This expedition was directed by the cavalry Captain Don Gasper de Portolá, the Military Governor of Lower California. He was a brave Catalan official, who had fought for Italy against the Austrians, later coming to Mexico. As chaplain they had Father Junipero Serra, a Majorcan friar, head of the Franciscan Missions in Lower California. This expedition made its entrance into San Diego (the first town in Upper California) about the middle of 1769.

"When the Spaniards advanced along the Pacific coast to create the more famous of the two Californias," said Mascaro, "Washington was beginning to be somewhat known on the Atlantic coast. This was only a few years before the beginning of the War for American Independence.

"Father Serra, who had undertaken this evangelizing adventure in spite of his advanced age, fell sick at San Diego de Alcalá, near the present frontier of Mexico; and the captain of dragoons, military and civil head of the expedition, went on with his troop, his stores of food supplies carried by droves of mules, while a corps of natives of Lower California provided the necessary equipment for opening a road through the virgin lands.

"Part of the soldiers were from the Spanish peninsula: they belonged to a battalion of volunteers from Cataluna—and the remainder were horsemen from the so-called '*Presidio* of the Californias,' who carried as a defensive weapon the *cuera*, a coat made from several thicknesses

of deerhide, almost impervious to Indian arrows, and the *adarga*, made from two crossed cowhides. This was a shield which a horseman managed with his left arm, to defend himself and his horse from blows. They also carried two hard skins called *defenses*, hanging from their thighs on either side of the saddle, to cover the horses' legs and keep them from being torn by briars. These men were dexterous in handling their weapons, which consisted of a lance and broadsword, and also a short musket, which was carried on the pommel of the saddle. They were men of much fortitude and patience under fatigue, obedient, bold, agile; their leader Portolá considered them to be the greatest horsemen in the world, and the soldiers who did the most to earn their bread of the august monarch whom they served.

"They had to contend with the land and with disease, rather than with men. The natives tried to stop the advance of the whites, but they didn't dare to proceed to extremities. Portolá's men underwent great hardships in order to open a road in this land which had never before felt the touch of a white man's foot. Some of them died from improper nourishment, and the crews on board the ships which were following the coast-line were decimated by scurvy.

"Portolá, with his troop divided into two sections, marched and marched for several months, but on so harsh a soil his stages could be only short ones.

"At last, on November the second, as the explorers

stopped on the top of a hill, they saw a sort of inland sea, in which several islands were visible ; it was lost to view far inland. Thus San Francisco Bay was discovered. What the navigators had never been able to see from the ocean had been accidentally found by a captain of dragoons.

“The expedition had to retrace its steps to its point of departure—that is, to San Diego, without having found the port of Monterey either going or coming. Advancing toward the north, they passed by to the right of it. On the return, Portolá did not consider it necessary to waste his time hunting for the anchoring-place discovered by Vizcaíno a century and a half before. He had discovered a better one.

“Imagine what the captain of Gerona must have said when he joined Father Serra in San Diego : ‘I have not found Monterey, but instead of it I have a port like no other in the world.’ And as Gálvez had authorized Father Serra to give the name of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of his order, to the place he considered the most important of all those discovered by the expedition, the friar decided that the beautiful bay should be forever called San Francisco.”

Mascaro continued his relation of the life of Don Gaspar de Portolá. His expedition ended, there were others to colonize the lands he had explored ; he therefore returned to his post in Lower California. The government made him Lieutenant-Colonel of a regiment of cuirassiers who garrisoned Aranjuez, where the court was. And there he died

in 1806, two years before the invasion of Spain by Napoleon.

"Probably," resumed Mascaro, "he thought pretty often of that enormous bay he had viewed from a height and then left behind him, which he never was to see again. How could he have divined that the largest city on the Pacific, one of the most famous cities in the world, was going to be founded there, and that this would immortalize his name ?

"Colonel Portolá departed from this world without suspecting that he was going to be famous, more famous than many conquerors of the heroic epoch who had achieved unheard-of exploits but had the bad luck to discover lands in America which to-day lead a half-hearted existence or are completely forgotten. The names of these heroes are becoming more and more obscure, as the country they discovered and colonized sinks out of sight. On the contrary, the name of Portolá, discoverer of San Francisco, grows, for it is joined to that of a metropolis whose growth seems without limit.

"Some day," said Mascaro, "the vital kernel of human civilization, which passing from Asia to Europe, is now beginning to cross over from Europe to America, will leap to the great islands of the Pacific and to the Far East, following the sun around the world. And then San Francisco will be the heir of Paris, of London, of New York."

The Professor described the organization of the new territory. Four *presidios* were founded in it :

Monterey, San Francisco, San Diego, and Santa Barbara.

Noting the surprise of some of his hearers, he hastened to add :

“ ‘ *Presidio*, ’ in Spanish, signifies ‘ fortified place, ’ a place with a garrison. So it was always understood until about a century ago. But when criminals began to be sent to our *presidios* in Africa, or I should say to the fortified places we have there, the people began to use ‘ *presidio* ’ as a synonym for prison or penitentiary.

“ Three towns were founded, one of which, Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles (Our Lady the Queen of the Angels), a collection of huts around a humble Franciscan church, served as the nucleus for the beautiful modern city of Los Angeles. Later, the monks under the fervent leadership of Junipero Serra, created twenty Missions, each one day’s journey from the next, a chain of small monasteries with adjoining Indian villages which extended from San Diego de Alcala, near the present Mexican frontier, to above San Francisco.”

The Professor had seen the colossal statues of this bearer of religion and of civilization in Golden Gate Park, the most beautiful driveway in the great Californian city. The Missions founded by Father Serra had educated the Indians in a more disinterested way than the ancient Jesuit Missions of Paraguay; they limited themselves to their work of instruction without dreaming of trying to set up a religious State.

Many of these monks were born on the shores of

But during two hundred years, those who advanced through the war-like tribes of Apaches and Navajos had never obtained a grain of the precious metal; nor had the navigators exploring the Californian coast ever seen the glint of gold. Two years after the United States had conquered Upper California, the eagerly awaited discovery took place through a mere stroke of chance, breaking on the world with the suddenness and noise of a stage trick.

"Everything that happened in California," continued the Professor, "was the work of chance. For two centuries the Spanish pilots who explored the coast in search of a port, passed and repassed opposite one of the greatest harbours in the world without ever seeing it. The discovery, when it finally was made, was the work of a land soldier who was not looking for it. Hernado Cortes, and others who followed him, lost their fortunes (some of them their lives), seeking in vain for the gold of which there was frequent native report. And when at last chance laid bare the golden wealth of this soil, it no longer belonged to Spain."

The memory of the Spanish epoch of California made Mascaro begin a new account.

"There is a romantic California. . . . You have been there, and you must have heard the story of Concha Argüello."

Balboa, casting his eyes up and contracting his brow as if the memory moved him, made an affirmative gesture. He vaguely remembered this love story, which an old lady in Monterey had told him many years before. But as Florestan and

Consuelito, who had been somewhat bored by the story of this far-away country, seemed to be animated by the mention of a love story, Mascaro proceeded.

He had visited the *presidio*, the military part of San Francisco, where the forces of its garrison are quartered, following a tradition that dates from the Spanish epoch. He had seen how in the place the ancient fort had occupied the house of the Spanish Governor was preserved—a building of only one story with adobe walls and a roof of curved tiles, forming great caves to protect it from the rain and the sun. It was a house like all the ancient houses of Mexico and other Spanish-American countries. The American commandant had had it repaired to keep it from falling in, but with respect for its original lines. A bronze tablet recorded the fact that the Spanish chiefs of the ancient *presidio* of San Francisco had lived there.

“In 1806, when Portolá died in Spain,” said Mascaro, taking up his narrative, “Captain José Darío Argüello was commander of this fort, and a son of his, also an official, helped him to guard the *presidio* of Monterey. The captain had a fifteen-year old daughter, Maria de la Concepcion Argüello, born at the *presidio*, and baptized at the Mission of Dolores near by.

“I imagine her dressed according to the Spanish styles of that epoch: skirt wide and short, little silk shoes with ribbons crossed on the white stocking, the little face a pale brown, two little curls between the small ears and the velvety eyes, deep

and black, and on the tower of her abundant hair, a great tortoise-shell comb. On holidays when she went down to the Church of Dolores, where she had been baptized, she hung over this comb a great black mantle shaped like a tent. When she was alone at home, her rounded arms, with graceful dimples at the elbows, moved elegantly, issuing from out of her light sleeves, and her hands, free from gloves or mittens, made the castanets ring out to the accompaniment of the rhythmic movement of her feet.

"The daughter of the Governor of the *presidio* of San Francisco loved to dance, but her modesty as a well-bred Catholic maiden made her seek solitude to amuse herself with this pleasure. She danced by herself, clicking her castanets next to her ear for hours and hours, as if they talked to her, telling their secrets of a distant world. Many affirmed that in the exuberance of her childish pleasure she liked dancing before the holy images better than praying before them, believing that she expressed her veneration more sincerely in this way.

"One day, when the Governor Argüello, was in Monterey, a Russian frigate—the *Juno*—came to San Francisco Bay, which hitherto had been visited only by the ships of the Spanish navy and some ships of the coastwise trade. The boat was under the orders of a St. Petersburg aristocrat, a chamberlain of Tsar Alexander I., named Nicholas Rezanov. He voyaged the length of the Californian coast under pretext of scientific explorations, and for this he had on board a German scholar named

Langdorff, who was writing a book on the expedition.

"The arrival of the Russian vessel in the solitary Bay of San Francisco was such an extraordinary occurrence that the Governor Argüello, on receiving the news, hastened to the fort at the bay, called San Joaquín. Immediately, he learned that the great Russian lord was concerned with matters very far from a political exploration.

"I see Rezanov from here," said the Professor. "He was undoubtedly the type of romantic gallant that existed in the early part of the nineteenth century, with a somewhat fatalistic air of melancholy, a personage like the creations of Lord Byron, Madame de Staël, and other authors of the epoch, sentimental and tragic heroes, with cloak with cape, pale face and roving hair, as if an invisible hurricane had agitated it. From the moment he landed he felt in his heart the clicking of those castanets which accompanied the Governor's daughter everywhere.

"For ten days, the fort of San Joaquín, ordinarily a boresome and monotonous place, was full of festivity. Guitars and voices rang out next to the bronze cannons which rested on stone bases, reflecting their black throats in the waters of the bay. The girls of the colony intermingled in the *bercego*, a California dance, with the fandango and the bolero from Spain. The Russian sailors showed the California girls the waltz, a European dance which had been in existence a few years and represented a great novelty at that time.

“The chamberlain Rezanov made good use of all these occasions to talk alone with the lively Conchita, caressing her with his eyes while the girl continued her chatter, like a restless bird. One morning he paid the commandant of the fort a secret visit, and when the old soldier waited to hear some political proposition to his government, the lofty personage simply manifested his desire to marry his daughter, saying that she was willing. However, as a court dignitary, he needed his Emperor’s consent, and he was going to set out to obtain it.

“He asked them to grant him only two years to fulfil his word. He would return to California, thus completing a trip around the world.

“This lover from the sea, who was ten or twelve years older than Conchita and was accustomed to long voyages and the occasions of war, considered it an ordinary undertaking to traverse half the earth for a monosyllable from his Emperor and then to continue his voyage, crossing the other half of the world, to get back to the starting point. From St. Petersburg he was going to Madrid as Envoy Extraordinary of the Tsar, to dissipate any possible misunderstanding between the two nations on account of his visit to California. After passing some weeks at the court of Carlos IV., then ruled over by the favourite Godoy, he would set sail for Vera Cruz or some other Mexican port; from there he would take the road to San Francisco, and join his promised bride.

“Captain Argüello was confounded and upset by

his future relationships to this personage who was the Tsar's friend and who soon was to be a friend of his king. Perhaps he saw his daughter living in the Spanish court as wife of the Russian Ambassador, passing through the gardens of Aranjuez, on holidays when its fountains ran in imitation of those of Versailles. And he also saw himself Governor-General of all California, or an even more powerful functionary in Mexico City.

"Rezanov was in a hurry, and one May afternoon the *Junco* raised anchor, pointing its prow northward, toward Russian America, across from Siberia. The white frigate saluted the fort of San Joaquín with six cannon-shots, and the fort returned the salute with nine.

"The exquisite dancer wept with her handkerchief in front of her eyes; she waved it at the frigate, wet with her tears. The Governor and the important persons of the *presidio* bowed and took off their hats to reply to the acclamations of the Russian crew as the good ship receded into the distance.

"And Rezanov never returned. . . . Concha Argüello waited more than thirty years, without hearing from him. The freshness and high spirits of youth fled from her. At last she altogether lost her beauty. She was a woman aged by sorrow, hard and dry from the privations of austerity, but she never forgot the white man, blonde and magnificent, who had passed through her life like the character of a novel. He had filled only ten days of her history with his presence, but these

days weighed more and emitted a greater light than all that she had lived since. . . . It was thirty-six years before she knew that her fiancé had died a few months after being separated from her. All that time she had thought that he had been unfaithful and forgetful, and had been vaguely awaiting his repentance and his return. . . . And he was only a corpse, a skeleton, finally a heap of bones, which little by little were disintegrating into the dust of the earth.

"The romantic personage, disembarking on the coast of Siberia, had begun his trip across Asiatic Russia. A fall from his horse caused his death at Ojotsk, a small city lost in the midst of the snow, now a trans-Siberian railway station.

"Langdorff, the German scholar who had gone on the *Juno*, visited his tomb the following year, and wrote a book about the expedition, telling among other things the strange story of Rezanov and Concha Argüello, daughter of the Governor of the *presidio* of San Francisco.

"This love story was widely read, and the public in Europe knew the truth long years before the woman whom it most concerned. All knew of the death of Chamberlain Rezanov when he was travelling to St. Petersburg, to ask his Emperor's permission to marry; all except Conchita, the Californian girl of the castanets, who still awaited him.

"San Francisco was then the farthest corner of the world. Nothing but a few exploring vessels ever came to its deserted waters. No book from

Europe dared to undertake such an unheard-of voyage.

“ ‘He will never return!’ said Concha at last.

“Her parents had died. Her brother was Governor of San Francisco; he had been named by the new Republic of Mexico.

“The happy Creole girl never danced now. She was a woman who had lost her youth, and now dedicated her days to the education of poor children and to the care of the sick.

“As in the forgotten California there were as yet no convents, she lived at liberty; sometimes with her brother’s family, at other times at the home of old friends of her father; but her existence was that of an ascetic, and she had joined the Third Order of San Francisco in order to wear their black habit.

“The people admired her for her voluntary deprivations and the self-denial with which she attended to the unfortunate. Perhaps the girl of the fort of San Joaquín, now aged, when she found herself alone sometimes amused herself by clicking the forgotten rattles, in this way evoking the image of those ten days which had been her real life. The people called her the ‘Saint of the Castanets.’

“Thirty-six years after the *Juno* weighed anchor to go far away from San Francisco—that is, when Concha Argüello was just fifty-one years old, there came to California an English gentleman, Sir George Simpson, who was making a trip around the world by land.

"This occurred in 1842. The occupants of the ancient Mission of Santa Barbara gave him a banquet, for the passage through the country of a personage of such importance was not an ordinary event. No one in the town failed to be present at the festivities. In the crowd, Simpson noticed a woman dressed like a nun. She had been brought along against her will, by the family in whose house she lived.

"Some neighbours told him her history. She was the daughter of the old Spanish Governor of San Francisco, and had waited all her life for her Russian fiancé, who had gone and never returned.

"The Englishman had read Langdorff's book when it came out in 1814, and marvelled at seeing in the flesh the heroine of this old historical love story. But his surprise was increased on realizing that this woman, after thirty-six years had passed, was still ignorant of her fiancé's death, thinking that he had married another and had forgotten her.

"Sir George then recounted how Rezanov had died a few weeks after his departure from San Francisco, remaining forever under a slab of stone in a Siberian cemetery.

"Ten years later, when the first convent of Dominican nuns was established in California, Concha took the habit, changing her name to Mariá Dominga. She died in 1857.

"This is the story of the Saint of the Castanets, who passed the greater part of her existence looking at the solitary Californian sea, feeling in

her soul the fluctuation of confidence and distrust like the rising and falling of the waves : sometimes weeping for the infidelity and forgetfulness of the absent one ; at other moments believing he would come, when the lookouts of the fort announced a sail on the horizon. . . . And the man she had awaited for so many years had died ! . . . And she never knew it until the last years of her life ; a life made up of ten days of love and thirty-six years of waiting ! ”

CHAPTER V

What are you doing here? . . . The World is wide.

WHEN Mascaro's wife compared Consuelito with most of the girls of her age—whom she disdainfully referred to as "*modernistas*"—the contemplation of her daughter's virtues filled her with great satisfaction and her contemptuous and generally low opinion of the others was outspoken.

"These girls!" she would say. "You'd think they *hated* their mothers, the way they keep away from them. Lots of them want to go out alone, as if they were gypsies! What are they good for? They dance and dance, like regular chorus girls; they wear their hair bobbed, the way pages used to, and at teas and dances they smoke in public with the boys that take them there. Before I was married I went everywhere with Mama, but I never saw such going-on! . . . How will these women run their homes when they get married?—if they intend to marry at all, which I doubt! . . ."

The Professor would smile tolerantly.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? III

"Girls will be girls, you know. Let them go to dances while they have a chance. The time will come soon enough when they will have to look at things seriously."

Doña Amparo would receive these remarks of her husband in hostile silence. According to her, he was much a "*modernista*" as her daughter. At such times Mascaro would suddenly see her in a pitiless and accusing light, and the kindly swaddling-clothes in which he used to dress up his memories of his wife would drop off.

He remembered the way her eyes used to look when she was young—long, triangular, almond-shaped, and having in them all the fullness of youth. Now the lids had shrunk, and her once-beautiful eyes stuck out of her head like a cow's. As so often happens to beauties of dark complexions, the down on her upper lip had waxed heavier until it became a straggling moustache. She tried to hide this under a prodigious application of rice powder, and kept constantly taking her powder puff out of its case.

She spoke with pride of the smallness of her waist and kept her faith with the corsets of her youth, lacing very tight to bring out more markedly the roundness of her breasts and hips: she had a "body like a guitar," her husband would say. Another heritage from her youth was her fondness for high coiffures, with bunches of false curls, over which she would wear hats almost crushed under the weight of the flowers with which they were trimmed. She considered these to be an in-

dispensable crown for the superb edifice of her hair—natural and artificial.

Now that forty years had passed, Mascaro would look her over with the contradictory feelings of tolerance, tender comradeship, and irony. When he recalled his courtship of this beauty of the Levant coast, he murmured within himself, "To think that I dedicated so many verses to her, and actually wanted to kill a lieutenant who tried to get her to marry him!"

When Doña Amparo was not comparing her Consuelito with other girls, she seemed to feel less enthusiasm for her virtues. She often bewailed her daughter's ingratitude, after the fashion of mothers who realize that they are no longer first in their daughters' affections.

"She loves her father better than me. The pair of them simply ignore me!"

Undoubtedly, Consuelito, like most girls of her age, was beginning to feel a confused sex admiration for her father, as if through him she could divine something of the mysterious man the future held in store for her. Apart from this, the Señorita Mascaro showed toward Don Antonio the tender commiseration that victims of injustice always inspire. Whenever there was any trouble between her parents, she would instinctively—before knowing the facts of the case—side with her father.

Furthermore, this girl who had grown up among books, and showed an evident affection for the kind of reading she would call "serious," used to follow Don Antonio's studies with interest. She

was the only one in the house who praised and respected his obscure professorial labours. With the natural imitative instinct of children, Consuelito wanted to dedicate herself to the glories of being a Doctor of Philosophy, and, forgetting her youth and sex, pictured herself occupying a professor's chair, with hundreds of men listening to her in respectful silence.

When she finished her elementary studies, she began to work toward her baccalaureate degree. Doña Amparo would protest frequently, but her father stood up for her. Her mother could not understand a woman's doing something that ought to be the exclusive right of men. To her, scholarship was a profession like that of a soldier or a sailor—or something just dangerous—for men only.

"I don't say that a woman ought to be a fool. It is nice to be able to read a pretty, entertaining story once in a while, and it's all right to know enough to write a letter. But all this business of big thick books is for men: so is science. A woman's place is in the home, with her children. If she does well there, she does enough."

Then she looked her husband over with a certain commiseration, adding: "And we have enough learned people in the family. What good has *his* learning ever done him!"

The family's expenditure was modest enough. They spent no more than was right. Even so, the Professor's salary and the income from his textbooks would not have been enough to free them from money worries. But fortunately Doña Am-

paro's parents had left her real estate, situated in the city of her birth. It wasn't worth much to begin with, but city improvements raised its value considerably, and furnished the family with a small fortune that had rounded out their well-being.

Consuelito had received her bachelor's degree and was about to go into the University when she all at once showed complete indifference to her future scientific glory. Doña Amparo, who by this time was somewhat resigned to these whims, was agreeably surprised at this change, even though she did not understand it at first. Later, thanks to her feminine intuition, which could explain many things that could not be dug out of books, she began to divine the feelings of the girl.

The Mascaro family lived next to the Engineer Balboa and his son. Balboa felt lost when his wife died. He was like certain sea-animals, who attach themselves to a larger creature and are borne along clinging to it. Balboa's motherless boy Florestan had been looked after by Doña Amparo and he was as much at home in Mascaro's house as in his own. The Professor's wife, when she visited the Engineer's place, spoke familiarly to the two servants, giving them advice and suggestions which they considered as orders.

Florestan was two years older than Consuelito, and that had seemed to make an enormous gulf between them. He took a superior attitude toward the girl, and made long drawn-out explana-

tions of everything, as if she were unable to understand anything he said. This contemptuous air of her childhood's companion had had a decisive influence on her scientific enthusiasm. She wanted to be a scholar, because she wanted to show Florestan that scholarship is not a thing reserved for men. And at the same time she took note that the young man showed himself less contemptuous than she, hiding a certain irritation at seeing how she dared to break into the dialogues of older persons, and how she used to receive praise from the Engineer Balboa for her discreet arguments and her bookish education.

Little by little, a rivalry grew up between the two old comrades. They were as fond of each other as ever. Florestan would have fought for her as he used to when they were playing together in the street and Consuelito called to him for help. But his affection was mixed with a jealous aggressiveness, and each one tried to "best" the other. When one was humiliated, the other would rejoice—and then presently the positions would be reversed.

Mascaro's daughter, who considered herself talented, and a "free" individual, was very frank about her feelings. She spoke of Florestan as of a tyrant whom one had to overthrow. When the young man announced with pride that he was soon to enter the Engineering School, she gave him to understand that she was going to enter the University the following year. He would learn how to pierce the earth's crust in search of metals ;

he would be an engineer, but only one of many. She, on the other hand, would become a famous teacher, a distinguished woman, like certain Spanish ladies of other centuries who had occupied chairs in universities. Her father had reminded her of these in order to strengthen her resolution.

Florestan, influenced by the jealous rivalry, did not take into account the changes that life itself was making in his hostile friend. She ceased being an angular, somewhat boyish child. The whole of her seemed to acquire a velvety softness; and a new sweetness came into the sparkle of her eyes, the timbre of her voice, the new-born roundness of her limbs, the touch of her skin.

Doña Amparo had considered the girl, as a child, very like her father, and had accepted this lack of beauty with a certain pride as a sign of her conjugal faithfulness. Now she began to think that Consuelito was becoming the image of herself at the time she first met her husband, before her tender beauty was fully ripe. Her daughter had her own aristocratic Spanish daintiness of hands and feet. She mourned the fact that the corsets of to-day, or the modern lack of corsets, would not permit her daughter to display the family heirloom of a slim waist, which had been the glory of her own youth.

When Mascaro began to be disturbed at Consuelito's depression and her sudden indifference to historical matters, Doña Amparo smiled proudly. She was better informed of certain things than her husband, even if he was a wise man. "I know

what's the matter with her. . . . Very likely I understand it better than she does herself."

Since Consuelito never mentioned her studies any more and seemed to have abandoned them, her debates with Florestan ceased. The girl would take his prankish quips without a word, and if she spoke it was to praise everything he said. Balboa's son, conquered by this melancholy meekness, began in his turn to become less talkative. In the evenings when the Mascaros went to visit the Engineer, they would sit looking at one another, never saying a word.

Florestan invented pretexts for more frequent visits to the Professor's house. Doña Amparo, with motherly complacency, would sometimes let Florestan take her place and be a companion to Consuelito when she was not able to be with her.

"You are like one of the family. I have loved you both since you were little, and nobody can talk if they find you together."

When she was alone with her daughter, Mascaro's wife, with the solemnity of one who believes that she is repeating the greatest teachings of experience, would say :

"You are following your true vocation at last. The most important thing for a woman consists in finding the man who is worthy to be her companion for the rest of her life. Marriage is the only career ; the others are '*modernismos*' and hardly proper here, although they may be all right for foreigners."

The two young people felt themselves being

with his studies, lending a devoted attention to his father's somewhat chimerical inventions, and the time he had free from work he devoted to sports, enjoying the voluptuous feeling of energy that the development of his muscles gave him.

His love for Consuelito was a tranquil, measured, regular passion, no different from that of a husband who is sure of his wife.

They would marry when he had finished his course. Everything was ready in advance. Nothing happened to cause his fiancée to feel attracted to any other man. Neither of them knew the caprices of mad lust, nor the overwhelming passions of infidelity.

One morning, when he was twenty-five years old, with the end of his course and the beginnings of his career well in sight, he saw in his father's workroom those two foreign women, one of whom Mascaro nicknamed "Queen Calafia." On the morning following this visit, he went to the Palace Hotel to give Mrs. Douglas the packet of documents referring to the Mexican mines.

It was a little past noon, and he had to wait for her in the hall. About one o'clock, Mrs. Douglas and Rina arrived. They had just got out of their automobile in front of the hotel door, and were having to elbow their way through the anxious crowd that had been drawn by the novelty of seeing a woman driving her own car.

Florestan's presence seemed to please the two. The widow, after having handed the young man's papers over to her companion, took off her motoring

coat and gave it to Rina, asking her to take both things up to their apartment. She did not want to be separated from this stalwart young man who seemed so disturbed by her presence and look, and stammered so awkwardly, that she was afraid he would take advantage of her absence to flee, now that he had carried out his father's orders.

"You must stay and lunch with us. . . . Don't say you won't. I owe you that courtesy. It is a very slight return for the trouble you have had in bringing those papers."

Stammering and smiling awkwardly, he tried to refuse, but at last, not wishing to seem timid, he accepted resolutely. He telephoned home, so that his absence would not trouble them there.

During the lunch, Queen Calafia explained to him the reason for her presence in Madrid. Then she outlined her daily routine. Some of her fellow-countrymen were lodged on the other side of the Paseo del Prado, in the Hotel Ritz. She dined at the Ritz every night, because in this way she could see many of her friends who were staying in Madrid, and whom she had met in divers hotels in Europe. But the rooms in the Palace Hotel were larger and more comfortable. Moreover, from the windows of this enormous modern hotel, one enjoyed the most interesting view in Madrid.

"From the Ritz one can see only rows of buildings on the other bank of the Prado. From here I see the trees in the gardens of the Retiro, that

small museum that you call 'El Casón'; at my feet, the Fountain of Neptune with his marble sea-horses covered with water. But what I like best of all is that at any time whenever I open my windows, I have before me the Museo del Prado."

Here was one sight that could be depended on, that never varied, with its walls of rose-coloured bricks and its white columns. And she was drawn by what she knew was within those walls. She felt their importance; it pleased her to have famous people for neighbours, although she seldom saw them. She preferred this hotel because every morning the first thing she saw on getting up was the rose-and-white palace in which lived her ancient and venerable friends, Velásquez, Goya, Titian, Rubens.

"To live here, near such distinguished and agreeable people, is well worth the trouble."

Florestan slowly lost his timidity during the rest of the meal. This woman, of whom he had heard his father speak with anxiety, as if he feared her coming, now impressed him as good-natured, friendly, talkative. He ended by conversing with her without any fear, as if he had known her a long time.

Rina, in spite of her secondary position, inspired him with less confidence. His eyes dodged hers, which looked at him with a doglike devotion. He preferred the affability of the widow to the admiring silence of the old maid. This affability of Mrs. Douglas was a gracious thing that impelled her to

belittle herself in order to avoid disturbing her listeners ; it filled him with confidence.

The beautiful Californian seemed to be interested in the young man's life. Doubtless he had a fiancée. The Spanish are sentimentally very precocious. She remembered the novels and romances based on amours in Spain which she had read. They were all overloaded with carnations and balconies and guitars. And Florestan, blushing as if he were confessing a fault, declared that he had a fiancée, but avoided giving further details.

The two women did not ask if she was young and pretty, because it seemed obvious that she must be, since he was such a splendid young man ; and they immediately put the young lady to one side, preferring to occupy themselves wholly with Florestan. Concha Ceballos was listening with growing interest as he told about his life and his aspirations. . . . These women seemed quite willing to hear about nothing but his studies and his achievements in athletics.

Little by little, Florestan went on to speak of his past life. He had no memory of his mother. He kept a picture of her, but it was so small and so blurred that he could not form any clear idea of what she had looked like.

The widow Douglas looked at him with a new interest on hearing the memories of his childhood, passed among distant relatives without a mother's care, and with a father who loved him a great deal but was always away pursuing some will-o'-the-wisp

of an invention. All his love had been concentrated on this father, whom he admired for his talent, and pitied for his lack of an outlet in life.

"He is so ill! . . . The doctors say that we ought to spare him all unusual emotion. He may live many years or he may die like a flash. His life is uncertain, like everybody with heart disease. It isn't fair for such a good man to be tormented by worries and troubles. . . ."

The face of Queen Calafia reflected a fleeting expression of remorse. She remembered her aggressiveness toward Balboa and succeeded in changing the subject.

Rina seemed to have completely forgotten her anger and her protests against her "bad man" of Madrid. She looked fixedly at Florestan, admiring his youth; she listened to his voice like martial music, without knowing very clearly what he said. All the useless sentimentality left by long years of unsatisfied love stirred and boiled in her in the presence of this athletic young man. She admired him generously, knowing that her admiration would never be understood or appreciated. Men had eyes only for the widow, because she was a millionairess and stylish. But the old maid enjoyed the pure and disinterested delights of a poor man who rejoices in the gains of others when he knows that such fortune will never come to him.

When the luncheon was over and Florestan had gone, she summed up her admiration in a phrase:

"Have you looked at him, Conchita? He

smells of mountain shrubbery. . . . He smells of running water, of the sap of spring."

After he had left the hotel, Florestan felt the pull of centrifugal energy which seemed to be drawing him out of the orbit of his ordinary life. Rare was the afternoon that those women did not make him abandon his studies or his usual walk with some comrades of the Engineering School. They called him to the hotel, receiving him in their own drawing-room. They expressed the desire to go through, with the young man's assistance, the packet of documents relating to the mine. But the bundle remained on a table in the salon without ever being opened. As soon as Florestan came, the two felt a violent hunger for the open air, for country landscape, for breathless speed. The automobile was downstairs, in the care of Mrs. Douglas' chauffeur. Florestan must be their guide and show them around Madrid.

Rina and the American chauffeur sat in the rear seat. The widow took the wheel, and sometimes when they were under way she changed places with the young man, giving up her driver's seat to him so that he could practise running the car and get used to its peculiarities. Having been made in the United States, it was different from the cars of European make with which Florestan was familiar.

They ascended the winding highroads that zigzag among the waterfalls of Guadarrama; they drove up gullies that in the winter were hidden under avalanches of snow; they stopped in clumps of

Alpine vegetation to look down at certain valleys with villages of dark-coloured roofs, which in the heart of Spain recalled the countrysides of Switzerland; at the summits they breathed the resinous odour of wood recently cut in the saw-pits. On the banks of the streams of ice water that cut the level places, covered with a vegetable moss, yellowish and fine as velvet, they often saw the splendid bulls raised for Spanish *fiestas*. These would get up with a warlike air on hearing the sound of the automobile and would lower their heads, desirous of attacking the metallic animal that threw back into the wind a tail of smoke and a much larger one of dust. On some evenings, Florestan would present himself at Mascaro's house in a dinner jacket, an extraordinary attire to the Professor's family. He came to make his excuses: he could not see them until the following day. The two women had invited him to dine at the Ritz, for they wished by means of these invitations to make his services as companion agreeable to him.

Consuelito at first showed a disposition to object. She had planned to spend an evening with her fiancé. Her house, and also Don Ricardo's, seemed empty when Florestan was away. Then she accepted the slight with a certain pride. She found it logical that those two foreigners should pay homage to Florestan, and should recognize in his person the same merits that she admired so much.

Doña Amparo felt her vanity slightly flattered at seeing her future son-in-law dressed with such

"distinction" and at imagining him frequently visiting the important persons who dined at the Ritz. But all at once a hazy, ill-defined doubt made her say in an aggressive tone :

"But when are those women going to leave ? . . . I should think that after they settled with Balboa about the mine, there would be nothing to keep them here."

One day Florestan took the Professor aside for the purpose of dragging him into the field of the centrifugal attraction that came from the direction of the two Americans.

"Don Antonio, those ladies would like to meet you. They are going out to see Toledo ; and they know that one cannot see it properly except with a person who knows all the traditions of the place, and I have told them that nobody knows as much about those things as you do. Besides, Mrs. Douglas is very anxious to see you because she knows that you have been in California giving courses at the University there."

And Mascaro let himself be taken to the hotel by the youth. The friends of Richard Balboa ought to be his too, he felt.

The Professor was sure that he would always remember that trip to Toledo. On the way out they escaped a mortal accident by sheer luck. They came very near to running into an enormous wagon with a sleeping driver, which was drawn by four mules that took their own time. The steadiness and the quick hand of Mrs. Douglas succeeded in making her car slide past this vehicle.

barely grazing it. Don Antonio was uneasy all the rest of the way. He was not accustomed to this furious speed along a country road full of holes, where the carts with their dozing drivers put themselves in front of the automobile, forcing the American every mile or two to pull sharply on her brakes.

But apart from these little scares, Mascaro felt very well satisfied. For the first time in his whole life he found himself in a real, tangible relationship with one of those women whom he called "extraordinary" and had hitherto known only in his imagination.

While they wandered through Toledo, and he gave them his explanations in the cloister of the Cathedral, in the Zocodover, or in the hanging passages which keep latent the life of other centuries, he was enjoying one of his imaginative adventures. The perfume of that great lady at his side, and his sudden contacts with her lithe, agile body each time he stumbled on an uneven spot in the pavement, seemed to give a new force to his extravagant fantasies. He saw himself making a trip around the world in tender association with that lady who was so much like the Queen of the Amazons. Toledo became a city in India; the Cathedral they were in was a huge abandoned pagoda, and he was making his historical explanations to his companion, who had followed him to Asia, mad with love. But he soon noticed that this "extraordinary" woman, while she did not cease listening to him, preferred to turn her eyes toward the

servants the two had brought on the trip, the valet and the maid.

Alas! This valet, when Mascaro looked closely at him, began to take on the face and figure of Florestan, his daughter's fiancé, and the thought of Consuelito was enough to bring him down to earth and dispel all his wild imaginings. Besides, Queen Calafia, so much in love with him in his imaginings, gave her attention in reality only to his learned expositions, and scarcely were these at an end when she went to join Florestan, quickening her pace that they might talk more intimately.

On being left behind, the Professor had to talk to Rina, who for lack of something better to do, began to talk to him in an infantile tone, employing other coquetries unsuited to her age and utterly useless as well: she knew he was married. He was somewhat ugly, of medium height, and in her dreams the old maid always saw arrogant, very tall young men. . . . But, after all, he was a man, and she preferred walking with him to being alone all the way.

After this excursion, Don Antonio remained a very good friend of the "Yankee pair" as he used to call them, and his wife and daughter, as a logical consequence, soon made the acquaintance of both of the foreigners.

Mrs. Douglas invited the two Balboas and the Mascaro family to dinner one night. Doña Amparo was running about all day getting ready to present herself as well as her daughter "worthily" in the salons of the Ritz.

It was the first time she had ever eaten in this hotel, and the fact greatly stirred her vanity. She would know how to bring the visit into her conversations with the wives of the other professors the next day. Furthermore, she would have a chance to see this Queen Calafia at close range—this woman who was always being talked about in her house and Balboa's.

During the meal, Doña Amparo remained very serious and sparing of words. She had to do this to hide her varied and conflicting emotions. Her mind was impressed with the occasion and concerned as to the effect of the changes she had made in her dress ; it was a little antiquated, comparing it with the dresses of other women who sat at the neighbouring tables. It impressed her, furthermore, to find herself in this dining-room, which was considered the best in Madrid.

The only thing that gave her a certain satisfaction was the presence of her daughter. She was simply dressed, but her youthful freshness gave her an attractiveness distinct from the majestic elegance of the millionairess. Doña Amparo thought of the perfume and the colours of a flower next to the shining glitter of a magnificent and showy ornament.

She felt uncertain as to what definite opinion she ought to hold of Queen Calafia. That lady filled her with respect, representing in her existence the splendours of a world which she would never know. She admired the elegance of her gown, her double rope of pearls, the glitter of a blue diamond, square

and enormous, on one of her fingers. She was undoubtedly a woman of another species from Doña Amparo's, and on this account Doña Amparo simultaneously venerated and despised her.

Rina she saw through at once, divining the humbleness of her position. She felt dislike and irritation before the mystery of that face with its skin exaggeratedly smooth and childish, and its eyes of an old woman. She compared her to a Chinaman dressed as a woman. Besides, she "smelt of poverty," and she looked at all men with an anxious sympathy, even toward Doña Amparo's own husband.

All Doña Amparo's attention was for the "Ambassadress." At the same time that she admired her, she felt it necessary inwardly to protest against her. This woman's life was full of those habits and liberties that had made her so indignant at the other women whom she called "*modernistas*." Her daughter, on the other hand, did not hide the attraction that she felt for the luxury and the elegant costumes of the women from abroad. At the end of the meal, Concha and Rina smoked. At the other tables the women who smoked were many; but Doña Amparo was willing to see only Queen Calafia and her companion.

Consuelito, who showed herself to be extraordinarily cheerful, accepted a cigarette, tipped with rose-petals, that her new friend offered her and lit it without asking her mother's permission. She felt encouraged by the Professor's approving laugh; in that dining-room he was living through

one episode more of his mental adventures. And the austere lady saved her wrath for the time when they should return home and she should find herself alone with her husband.

After this dinner, Queen Calafia was spoken of like an old friend at the Mascaros' house. Consuelito mentioned her frequently, finding to her taste everything that she had heard of the other, accepting her ideas, imitating her ways a little, and even her manner of wearing her clothes.

Doña Amparo was the only one to resist the seductive influence of the foreigner.

"I can't let her invitation rest. I have to return it," she said, wrinkling her brow into a frown, as if she had received treatment offensive to her. "We will have to invite her, or she will think we are poor people. If she has her millions, I have my dignity."

"Good, my dear!" replied Don Antonio, kindly. "We will give her a luncheon of Spanish dishes."

Florestan dined at the Ritz several nights a week. It was impossible for him to escape from Concha's invitations. Besides, she showed a sincere interest in his future, and this made the whole Mascaro family tolerate the young man's absences without worrying about them.

He must think about his career. Consuelito saw herself, thanks to the patronage of Queen Calafia, living with her husband in the United States, that land of marvels of which her father spoke with such enthusiasm. Doña Amparo forgot for a moment

the contradictory reactions that Mrs. Douglas had produced in her and considered her in relation to the children's welfare. Perhaps that millionairess, a widow and childless, would furnish the young married couple with the means to enrich themselves.

As a matter of fact, the Californian had talked many times with the young man about his plans for the future, asking him questions about what he intended to do after he finished his college course. She could understand only a man who had an ideal capable of positive realization, and was working to attain it. It amazed her to find out how limited Florestan's outlook had been up to that time. He had been born outside of Spain, and had lived there during his early childhood, but since then he had always remained in Spain, never even crossing its frontiers.

"And haven't you even been in Paris?"

No, Florestan had never again visited a foreign country. His father had taught him French and English. And during their evenings together, Florestan used to listen to his father, as if he were hearing fairy stories, while the inventor would describe the countries in which he had lived, and which he was going to visit again some day.

"But I don't know when I shall go, Señora. I think of my father, who may die suddenly when we least expect it, and this makes my trips difficult."

Then remembering her resolute conduct as a

poor woman in Monterey, facing the future by the side of her ruined father, she gave this advice to the student :

“ You must be energetic. You must work and make yourself rich. Only a man with money is free.”

One night, Rina did not accompany them at their dinner at the Ritz. She remained shut up in her room in the Palace Hotel, on the excuse of a violent headache. Concha and Florestan laughed, supposing that some facial disorder obliged her to remain hidden for a few hours.

In the dining-room at the Ritz, Concha met a family of Americans who were stopping in Madrid on the way to visit Seville and Granada. Florestan was presented to them, and all the women in the party, seeing in the young man an available dancing partner, passed him from one to the other all night long.

Queen Calafia had almost always overlooked the possibility of dancing, preferring to talk with Florestan ; but to-night she was irritated at the ease with which her friends made use of a man whom she had just introduced to them. And to prevent such an abuse of her kindness, she tried to take all the dances herself. She kept inviting Florestan with a gesture or a movement of her eyes.

They danced until three in the morning and drank a good deal. The head of the family, to celebrate their meeting with Mrs. Douglas, the famous beauty of their country, had the head

waiter continually renew the bottles of champagne. This he did with all the quickness of a sleight-of-hand performer, opening one before the other was more than half empty. The glasses always seemed to be full, in spite of the fact that the agitation of dancing and the heat of the salon obliged the couples to seek them avidly at the end of each dance.

The Ambassadors and Florestan set out together from the hotel. She preferred going on foot. They had only to cross the Prado. The Palace Hotel raised its bulk on the other side of the dark clump of trees.

The lady felt warm. She had opened her cloak at the neck. She leaned heavily on the young man's robust arm and confessed laughingly that she had drunk and danced to excess. What would they say of her over in her country if they saw her this way . . . a woman who was a patroness of so many respectable societies for the prohibition of alcohol, the excesses of the dance, and other abuses and sins! . . . Ah, old Europe! . . . temptress! . . . But at the same time she found in this situation something abnormal, which gave a new savour to existence. She discovered attractions in life of which she had hitherto been unaware, and began to wonder whether she had been deceiving herself up to that time. . . .

They left behind the automobiles and the groups of chauffeurs stationed in front of the hotel, and soon found that on the walk they were in absolute solitude.

The silence of the night was cut by the monotonous chant of the fountain of Neptune. As it was not far from dawn, the greater part of the public lighting had been put out. Only some lanterns, old and widely spaced, marked their red pastel-lines under the ebony arch of the trees.

It seemed like a country path in its deep darkness, a deserted grove at an enormous distance from all human kind. The masses of buildings on both sides of the dark pathway might have been graded hills or vertical banks. Above them was spread a wide band of sky, twinkling with infinitely distant stars.

Queen Calafia stopped in the middle of the short distance between the two hotels, near the marble car of Neptune. The scent of water from the murmuring basin was like a caress.

This murky and mysterious quietude suggested to her the possibility of thieves appearing, attracted by the glitter of her ornaments. The idea made her tremble lightly on the muscular arm upon which she was leaning. A thief would be interesting! . . .

She recalled her knowledge of wrestling, the different ways of upsetting an opponent. She imagined also, with a certain vanity, the aggressive force which that athletic, bashful boy at her side could call up to defend her. Then she repented of her evil designs.

"You have been drinking, Conchita!" she said, using the same diminutive that her father gave her

when she was a child, which she always remembered when she was recriminating herself. "You have been drinking too much, my daughter!"

Looking over the inert city, it seemed to her that the night was going to last forever, that that sleeping human agglomeration under the roofs would not come out and scatter any more. . . . If it did come out, her life would be dark, perilous . . . isolated from the rest of the world, almost like a dream.

She felt a sudden pity for that simple and beautiful youngster who served as her escort. She inclined her head toward him, seeking his eyes.

This affectionate gesture bore at the same time a hostile eagerness. Her mouth at that moment, could bite as well as kiss.

"You have been drinking, Conchita!" she kept saying mentally. "You have been drinking too much!"

Her outer voice asked at the same time with violence, as if it formulated a recrimination:

"And is a man like you going to stay here forever? You will be married and have children, and you will never see beyond the threshold of your own house. The only ideal in your existence will be that of supporting your family."

Florestan was surprised by the violent tone of these questions and did not know what to answer. He also was perturbed by what he had drunk and by the contact of that body that bore on his with familiar *abandon*.

She began walking again, taking his arm, and said brusquely, as though giving him an order :

“What are you doing here ? . . . The world is wide.”

CHAPTER VI

In which the Queen's lovers appear.

A WEEK later, as the widow was passing through the hall of the hotel, at lunch hour, she experienced an unexpected encounter.

A man buried in an armchair, with his face enveloped in the fragrant cloud of his Havana, put down his cigar on the stand near by when he saw her and rose, smiling.

"Oh, Mrs. Douglas! What an agreeable surprise! . . . I didn't know that you were in Madrid."

Mrs. Douglas smiled back, but maliciously.

"Neither did I think that you were here, Mr. Arbuckle. But it always seems to turn out that we meet."

And the man called Arbuckle, who in stature and bulk was almost a giant, lowered his eyes as if he could not resist her sarcastic look. He showed the confusion of a big child who has told a lie and been caught at it.

This man, heavily boned and big muscled, seemed to be between thirty and thirty-five. He

had the head and neck of an antique gladiator ; the vigorous and restful beauty of a bull. He was smooth-shaven, and his smiles were accompanied by the ivory sparkle of some of his teeth and the golden flash of others. In spite of his athletic build, his eyes and his mouth had something childish about them and all his person seemed to give off an aura of credulity and confidence.

He was undoubtedly of limited mental range, with very set ideas, but these were strong and well defined, and were stuck in his mind for good. He had a strong jaw, and at times a deep frown would come between his eyebrows and make his face less placid. The moods he showed changed frequently, as for instance when repeated contradictions would fill him with a tense anger, hard and cold like ice, altering the unity of his character which was predisposed to optimism.

Mrs. Douglas had met him in California years before, when she had become a widow and had needed to concern herself with the administration of her fortune. This Harold Arbuckle was also from California, and business men considered him a man of merit because he had finished the first part of his career in such a short time, and believed that he was destined for greater triumphs if he continued working. Like many Californians, he united the energetic will of the Nordic strain to the roving adventurous spirit of the first colonizers of that country.

Following the tradition of the land of his birth, he commenced by being a miner, a seeker for gold.

But he had been born too late. When the gold-bearing veins of California could no longer offer surprises, he had to work first in the Transvaal and later in the icy solitudes of Alaska. He was not even truly rich. He himself confessed that he was not "worth" more than a million dollars, but he reckoned on his great energy for work and the exactness of his appreciation of persons and things; these traits could make a multi-millionaire of him, a director of gigantic business like those men who live in New York.

He had known the Ambassadors Douglas in San Francisco when he was buying some stock in a gold mine in Alaska which she did not wish to keep. Their interviews while they were handling the matter had influenced Arbuckle's whole existence, and changed momentarily his course of action.

This tireless worker suddenly felt the imperative necessity of repose. He had no family, he was alone in the world; why was he forced to acquire more money? It was a cruel trick to keep him from knowing the true pleasures of life, concentrating all existence on the conquest of a useless wealth. . . . And leaving his speculations hanging, he applied himself to journeying through Europe, organizing his itineraries and sojourns in such a way that he always seemed to be staying in the same cities as the widow.

At their few meetings his pretexts and excuses turned out to be useless; they were too obviously false. The widow at once divined his intentions.

man's confused explanations with a good-natured smile.

"What a coincidence! I did not know that you were here. I am going to Seville. I was bored in Paris. I was intending to leave last night, but now that I have met you I will stay a few days longer."

She looked at him with incredulous eyes. She knew in advance all that Arbuckle was able to do. He would remain in Madrid until one day when her nerves were on edge; then she would sharply tell him that she had had too much of his presence. Or she and Rina might suddenly leave Madrid without letting him know.

The respectful discretion of this strong, timid man pleased her inwardly. He had installed himself that morning in the Palace Hotel, thinking that Mrs. Douglas lived at the Ritz. As soon as he was aware of his mistake, he at once changed his lodging to the Ritz. A gentleman ought to disappear opportunely when one is tired of seeing him, and it is not discreet to live under the same roof as the desired woman; but after this encounter the widow decided that it would be useless to put off presenting Arbuckle to the persons who surrounded her. This silent and tenacious lover ended by overcoming all rebuffs, and she would have to resign herself to introducing him into the circle of her normal life. Now that he had discovered her stopping-place, she might as well add him to her retinue.

That very night Arbuckle talked with Florestan

in the dining-room of the Ritz, and on the following day, when Mascaro had been invited to lunch, the Professor and the American were introduced to each other.

"A charming young fellow!" said Don Antonio as he left the hotel with Balboa's son. "I know the type; many of those who work in his country are like that. Unlimited activity; hard on themselves and on others during business hours; but once those are over, they show a simple happiness, cultivate their bodies until old age with the same games they played when they were children, and consider life with unshakable optimism."

"The people of Europe deceive themselves in imagining that American business men lead a life comparable to that of moneyed men in the Old World. Businesses are more set in the nations of the old continent, wealth is traditional and monopolized: a mysterious thing possessed only by some few hundreds of men, who pass it down from generation to generation. Before new capitalists can arise a great war must be fought or a historic upheaval occur. Each social class lives strictly in its own station, and changes from one to another are very rare."

"The European business man is sombre, bitter, sceptical, capable of skinning you with a look. 'What will the American one be like?' we said. And we found him a sort of overgrown child, very forceful in his work, and going to the club to play golf when work was over. If he falls, he is capable of doing anything to raise himself; if he is in want,

he would throw you through the window; but when he is earning money the first thing he thinks of is that everybody must get his share. They run their affairs well, laugh kindly, are delighted with every sort of story, see life through their optimisms, and think it necessary to have a generous and disinterested idealism, a rather 'romantic' idealism, as compensation for the vulgarity of their business."

Divining the sympathy of the Professor, Arbuckle would seek him out to help pass the many dragging hours when he found himself deprived of the company of Mrs. Douglas.

Mascaro admired the attractiveness of his new friend's attire. His shirts and ties seemed newly bought, his suits were eternally fresh, as if they had just come from under the tailor's iron; a typically American elegance, as Don Antonio said, "based on the street suit," with a great variety of hues and forms. On one lapel he displayed after the fashion of a decoration a small blue circle of enamel with an inscription: the insignia of his San Francisco Club.

Another reason for Mascaro's admiration was the prodigality and the strength of this man as a smoker. He never was able to surprise him without a cigar in his mouth; an enormous cigar, fat in the middle, with the strong odour of well-ripened leaf. When he talked he never took it out, but always held it firmly in one corner of his mouth. He chewed it and his teeth used up almost as much of it as the fire did. At times he would blow one

ring after another with an imperceptible rounding of his lips.

Arbuckle went every afternoon to sit in the hall of the Palace Hotel with the hope of seeing the Ambassadors, and if the Professor showed up in the lobby, his first greeting was to offer him a leather case with half a dozen cigars, long, big-bellied, spreading an aroma which made the imaginative Mascaro think of the Cuban tobacco fields.

His treatment by this new friend made the Professor fear for the safety of his throat. He was not able to consume these succulent cigars at all hours with impunity. Their strength was too much for him, although they never did the American any harm.

"Great old boy! He's a shark when it comes to smoking!" the Professor would say with veneration.

Sometimes he thought that Arbuckle carried a case filled with cigars in each of his pockets. Wherever he put his hand into his coat he would draw out cigars for himself and for everybody else.

When Mascaro went to take a walk in the early hours of the afternoon his feet immediately felt the attraction of the Palace Hotel.

"Let's go and see if friend Arbuckle is in the hall."

And he always found him. Arbuckle received him like an emissary sent by Luck to free him from the boredom of waiting alone.

He was not interested in seeing Madrid. He had seen it on other trips there. This time he had come for another purpose. He found it convenient to remain in the hall waiting for the widow to come down from her rooms or to come in from the street, that he might seem to encounter her merely by chance.

Sometimes he contented himself with seeing Rina, but she seemed to underrate him on account of his blindness and ignorance. A man who passed by his happiness without seeing it, binding himself to accomplish impossible things! . . .

Mascaro's presence helped Arbuckle to while away a good many hours talking with him, during which he was rarely so unlucky as not to catch even a fleeting glimpse of the widow.

Another cause of satisfaction for Arbuckle was the zeal with which the Professor kept recalling the visit he had made to California. Through Mascaro's enthusiasm, he would recall the panorama of San Francisco, the beloved "Frisco" of his childhood, whose development and beauty he continued to admire after having journeyed almost all over the world.

For the Spaniard, the University at Berkeley, on the other side of the beautiful bay, was one of the best memories of his life. He spoke of the belfry of the University, like a lighthouse which the inhabitants of San Francisco saw from the opposite shore; of its ten thousand students, of its Greek theatre, given through the munificence of a multi-millionaire, with groves in whose foliage

the birds sang like the chorus of the ancient tragedies.

"Here in Spain very few know what an American University is," he said one afternoon to Florestan, who had seated himself beside them in the hall. "Most people immediately think of a monstrously huge building. 'The best University in my country,' they say, 'has a frontage of fifty or a hundred yards. Then an American University ought to stretch for at least a third of a mile along the street. . . .' No, Señor; there a University is a park, an enormous park, with fountains, canals, and sometimes lakes for regattas. The library is a white palace; another palace belongs to Literature; another to Science; and besides these there are the groups of dormitories for the students, who are altogether free to come and go as they choose; and the club-house for the teachers, entirely separate in the midst of trees, and surrounded by singing birds. The whole place has an atmosphere that makes study a pleasure and work amusing and easy. The best memory that many men there preserve is that of the years spent in the Garden University."

Another favourite memory was that of his trip through Southern California, where the Spanish Missions used to be.

The Levantine of the Mediterranean Sea had imagined that he was re-living his childhood on seeing the orange groves of Southern California near the ocean and its other orchards of different kinds of fruits. There were fields similar to the

the advertisements and trademarks of the country.

It was a calm and sweet pleasure for Arbuckle to sit buried in the upholstery of an armchair listening to the Professor, surrounding himself with clouds of smoke, at the same time unobtrusively keeping watch, looking at all the persons who came into the hotel and passed him on the way to the elevators. As Mascaro knew how to evoke the memory of his beloved California with an almost tangible reality, this made him imagine Mrs. Douglas was there among them, although the hours were passing without her putting in an appearance.

While waiting for things to improve, Arbuckle found his actual situation acceptable. Some afternoons after lunch time the widow remained in the hall, talking with some friends, and then the old scholar who said such charming and agreeable things seemed to delight her with a word. The Californian felt that he understood the force of that attraction. He liked Florestan because of his youth; but he liked him less when he saw more of him. Besides the widow, he had eyes only for the great Mascaro.

Arbuckle counted on the realization of his desires in the course of time, and considered audacities and haste to be useless. Presently, his placid waiting was disturbed by an unexpected event. One afternoon, when Arbuckle was expecting the arrival of his friend the Professor, he saw another acquaint-

ance of his, whom he had imagined to be far away from Madrid, advancing from the lobby—the Marquis of Casa Botero.

In Paris he had seen him almost every day during several months, for the man was as persistent and tenacious a friend of Mrs. Douglas as he himself. When the Californian set out for Madrid, he had been greatly concerned that the other should not discover the stopping-place of the widow.

This meeting was the worst thing that could have happened to him ; but in spite of that, he pressed the hand of the Marquis with forced effusiveness, and hypocritical smiles. He had been trained from his youth to treat an adversary with courteous consideration. As a boy, he had often given his hand to companions with whom he had boxed, when the match was over, and the other fellow was rubbing his bruises or wiping the blood from his face. One should demolish the enemy if possible, but without ever failing in the consideration due him as a man.

“ You here ? What a surprise ! . . . ”

And the other replied with a petulancy in which could be divined his desire to smash the business man :

“ I suddenly felt an irresistible desire to see the Velasquez paintings again. I am very much an artist and I have spiritual necessities which some people cannot be expected to understand.”

Although the seductive personality of Mrs. Douglas—which separated them and at the same time forced them together—was not at this moment

present, Arbuckle could not feel any sympathy with this person on that account. An instinctive and irresistible antagonism reared itself between them. It was as if they belonged to two distinct species of men who had been attacking and devouring each other from the beginning of human existence.

The Marquis of Casa Botero was the same age as Arbuckle; his face seemed older than the American's and his body younger. He had a trim figure, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh; his body was lean like that of a sportsman who watches his weight and will not allow anything to cover his bones except force-producing muscle. This muscle, however, was clean and smooth without the heaviness of the professional athlete. His face looked older: under the flesh were ridges and hollows following the bone. His skin was rather wrinkled and darkened by exercise in the open air, by sitting still on the beach under the sun after bathing, by his winter trips to the smarter resorts of Switzerland. These were not wrinkles of age; they were leanness brought on by excessive exercise. He wore his blonde moustache short and his hair brushed back with such violence that an invisible hand seemed to be pulling at him. His movements and gestures had the lightness of a horseman's; in his cold look was the arrogance of a man of arms, who reckons on his advantages as a fencer.

In his international business deals, Arbuckle had often to deal with deception; and this had trained him to scent the presence or absence of money. By

the use of this sixth sense he rated the Marquis as poor, and took no stock in any of the man's efforts to appear wealthy, or in his elaborate show of being a multi-millionaire tired of his prosperity.

He certainly led a life as costly as that of the rich, and used to appear in all the places in Europe frequented by people with hoards of money. Mrs. Douglas had met him one spring in a hotel in Florence. Rina adored him from the instant she saw him, as if he were the materialization of all the interesting characters she had revered in the novels she called "aristocratic." The widow also looked at him with a certain sympathy when she heard that he was a Spanish Marquis.

This matter of the nationality of Casa Botero was none too clear. Sometimes he said he was Spanish, stating that his title of nobility had been given by the kings of Spain. Again, in explanation of his faulty pronunciation, he would declare that he had been born in Sicily, but that his grandparents had gone to Madrid with Carlos III., when that King had renounced the crown of Naples for that of Spain.

Arbuckle had his doubts of both his nationalities. He thought it more likely that the man had been born in one of the cosmopolitan villages of the Oriental Mediterranean, where the Jews who were expelled from the peninsula still speak ancient Spanish. How was it possible to be sure about this man or the legitimacy of his title? . . . His only visible occupation was collecting pictures and antiques, in the course of which, to satisfy his

this man inspired in her and the stories of his former life she felt remorseful. It was a feeling of shame such as we feel when a sin comes to light—shame that does not hinder us from persisting in it. She knew several “bad stories” of this Casa Botero, stories of amours which had made him lose his prestige and his social position; stories of ladies who at the last moment refused to be married to him. But all of this was very vague; nobody had it at first hand, and the Marquis continued to be well received in the respectable *salons* which she frequented.

Her sympathetic esteem for this disquieting man was her only mental sin and this encouraged her to indulge it. He had for her the curious interest which lively and serviceable libertines inspire in many honest persons. He was a sort of window through which she might look out upon a prohibited world. All the evil things she had been told about his past seemed to add new seductions to his person. His attraction—the terrible magnetism of the unknown—seemed to grow as she heard more gossip about perverse actions of his.

She, moreover, was a strong woman, disposed by instinct to seek out risky things. The fact that many persons feared to have any dealings with this man was enough to make the Ambassadors grant him greater favour. She smiled when some timid friends insinuated to her that this man was undoubtedly in search of her millions and was capable of compromising her by causing a social scandal which would force her to marry him. It

pleased her to play with danger, to throw this object of fear off the track without permitting him to advance a step further in her intimacy. It was as if she were taming a fierce wild beast, which she turned into a little yellow dog, trailing humbly at her heels.

The woman Mascaro nicknamed "Queen Calafia" could run risks, in these Amazonian exercises, without any fear. Her austere opinions, the ordered steadiness of her physical life, enabled her to consider herself strong, ignoring or deprecating the intoxication of the temptation. Her existence had the sweet and implacable regularity of a machine.

Adultery, with the deceptions and lies that form its accomplishment, had always seemed a cowardly thing to her, unworthy of a frank and valorous character.

"If I had once fallen in love," she said to herself, "if a man had made me his slave, I should tell my husband the truth, and separate from him before I would deceive him. Everything is preferable to lying. . . . What they call love, which forces them into the vileness of adultery, is undoubtedly a kind of disease, and the woman who catches it ought to carry the thing off bravely, not lie about it."

Neither did she admit that love could be possible without a mutual life. Hide it? Blush publicly for a passion to which one then secretly dedicated such beautiful words? . . . No; only in the light of day would she accept the love of a man.

For this reason the adventures of the Don Juan,

the incidents of the hidden and shameful passion which served as a base for so many love stories, attracted and diverted her as rare spectacles. They seemed to her the acts of a second-rate, unhealthy humanity, which was at the same time worthy of interest. Her health was always well balanced and her sensuality was dormant, which permitted her to listen calmly to those stories without fear of contagion, as a laboratory worker whose gloves protect him so that he can tranquilly handle mortal poisons or dangerous forces. There was also a good deal of feminine coquetry in her interest in her dangerous friend. As she had known no other passion than the quiet and sweet companionship of her husband, it secretly pleased her to see herself desired with violence, after the Latin fashion, and with a certain lack of respect.

She became offended, however, when Casa Botero began to go very far in his speech. Once he took advantage of their being alone and tried to kiss her; Concha Ceballos dropped him, unconscious and considerably damaged, to the floor, by the use of one of the jiu-jitsu blows that she had learned in her youth. It was a serious risk to try anything with her, if she had not already given her consent.

Later, when the Amazon listened to the jealous threats which the Marquis mingled with his declarations of love, she smiled with the vanity of a college girl.

Before she was married she had never heard anything like this from her suitors :

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"If you love another, I will kill him. I swear I will kill him!"

And she laughingly replied, "Very well then, you had better kill Arbuckle."

Casa Botero was somewhat taken aback, but he finally said with an air of magnanimous disdain:

"He is not important. I know very well that he will never be a serious rival of mine."

The widow continued to receive him for a while, in spite of the fact that she doubted his claims to nobility. This was partly because she appreciated his attentiveness, and partly on account of her desire to flirt with this man who was so terrible that all her friends were afraid of him. Thus would she convince herself of her own strength while she was showing her friends that she did not fear him. But presently she decided to go away. It would be prudent to take refuge for a while behind the barriers of time and distance. She felt too much of an impatient persistence in his desire to make her Marchioness of Casa Botero. . . . And in one of these moods she had undertaken this trip to Spain to help Rina to recover her money.

When this suitor presented himself in Madrid, she received the news of his arrival with a laugh.

"I was afraid of it," she said to her companion. "Now the family is together again."

Her laugh had undoubtedly contained a note of impatience. The Ambassadors did not feel, in Madrid, the same spirit of good-humoured tolerance toward her lovers that she had had in Paris and elsewhere.

Fortunately, the kindly Arbuckle relieved her of his presence. He never succeeded in exactly anticipating the wishes of the widow, but sometimes, aided by chance, he managed to serve her and please her better than his rival. He thought that since the Marquis—who was pleasing to women, although most men did not understand or trust him—was in Madrid, he would be unable to advance his own suit. It would be better for him to go to Seville for a while, and in this way he fell in nicely with the widow's mood.

The Marquis proved to be less discreet. He had installed himself at the Palace, and he incessantly sought the company of Mrs. Douglas. But Arbuckle thought he could go on his trip with an easy mind, because he was leaving good supporters behind him.

His illustrious friend Don Antonio had held a frankly adverse opinion of Casa Botero from the first.

"I don't like that type. Besides . . . what is this marquisate of his? . . . I have never heard such a title mentioned."

Florestan had shown a similar dislike for him since the night he was introduced to him in the dining-room at the Ritz. He was annoyed by the familiar tone of his conversation with Mrs. Douglas. It seemed to assume that in their past an intimacy had existed which it would be impossible to hide. And the theatrical courtesy with which he kissed her hand irritated the young man.

He realized then for the first time that other

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men besides himself could be friends of this lady—recipients of her words, her looks, and her smiles. He thought that they were stealing something that belonged to him, and this made him lose the calmness of his simple and straightforward character.

Casa Botero, who was probably aware of his feelings, treated him with an artificially courteous hostility. Again and again in the course of that first dinner, he had looked uncertainly at Mrs. Douglas and then at the young man. Then, taking advantage of a time when Rina was talking with Florestan, he leaned over to the widow and said quietly :

“I see that it hasn't taken you long to make a good friend in Madrid. Really, do people as young as that interest you ? ”

CHAPTER VII

In which Mascaro has trouble with his wife and executes a commission for Florestan.

THE day they first met Casa Botero in Florence, the two women heard him speak with pride of his noble Spanish ancestry. Later, in numerous talks they had in Paris and other cities, they realized that he was in the habit of speaking thus:

"The Casa Boteros are of Sicilian origin, but my ancestors served Carlos III. so loyally that when he renounced Naples and became King of Spain he could not bear to be parted from them. They followed him to his new kingdom and were prominent figures in the court at Madrid."

He talked like this when he was in France or in Italy, but when he was living in Madrid he began to show himself more Sicilian than Spanish. He forgot those grandparents of his who had followed Carlos III., and was able to recall only those others who had stayed with the Bourbons in Naples. He would also bring up certain property and other rights that he still possessed in Sicily. The only people who visited him in Madrid were some Paris

friends of his, fond of amusement and much given to pleasure—and as he had so often spoken of the illustrious uncles and cousins he had in Spain, he found it necessary to explain this disappearance of his family.

“My relatives”—this according to certain mysterious explanations to Rina—“were the most historic aristocracy in Spain, but the new government was never able to forget the loyalty of the Boteros to the legitimate monarchy, which they saw as a reproach of their own conduct. My grandparents followed the pretender Don Carlos, who was the real monarch, while my other relatives favoured the impostor. Because of this the government pretends to be ignorant of our marquisate, although it is undoubtedly more legitimate than that of the others, because the real king gave it to us.”

And the old maid used to repeat these explanations because she found a certain romantic savour in them. It seemed to make no difference to her that the widow listened with complete indifference. What did she care about the stories of this elegant gentleman of uncertain nationality, whom Arbuckle took for an adventurer? . . . She was not going to marry him. Moreover, the presence of the Marquis rather irritated her on the few occasions they saw each other in Madrid.

She turned out to be less malleable and sympathetic than she had been in Paris. Perhaps she had thought that living in this new atmosphere would give him new claims upon her. He considered

that, being the oldest of her friends, he had the right to be the most persistent and attentive one, and he showed a hostile disposition toward Florestan, treating him as an intruder.

The widow was no longer free to enjoy the frank pleasure of being accompanied everywhere by that respectful, timid boy, who seemed to scatter round his person a fluid energy, unconscious and quiet, like that of the mysterious telluric forces that surge through the entrails of the earth. The Ambassadors felt herself younger, more optimistic, and more clear-headed at his side. He often remained silent, unconscious of his rudeness, looking at her with softly caressing eyes.

The presence of the Marquis overturned this life of growing intimacy, which reminded her of her maiden days in Monterey, when she used to gallop along beside a horseman mute with timidity, who was mentally preparing his declaration of love. It was impossible for her to organize an automobile trip to any of the historic cities of Castile without Casa Botero dashing in at the last moment, ready for the journey. It was undoubtedly Rina's fault: either her carelessness or her excessive enthusiasm made her always give away the widow's plans for the following day.

Florestan, even more than Mrs. Douglas, was annoyed by the persistence of Casa Botero. As the latter lived in the same hotel, he did not need to spend long hours in the hall, like Arbuckle, spying on the comings and goings of the widow to get a chance to talk to her. Furthermore, he

showed himself less respectful and obedient than the Californian. He stuck to the group like glue; he was so stubborn at times that the widow had to be smilingly rude to get him to understand that she had seen enough of him for a while.

She was apparently anxious to get away from him and be near Florestan. At first, young Balboa had comported himself at the hotel like one who intends to comply to the letter with a courteous and kindly request. But in the course of a month—which was just about the time of his friendship with Mrs. Douglas—the character of these visits had been transformed.

If they were going out for a drive, a walk through the city, or for dinner, he would arrive at the Palace considerably before the appointed time. Sometimes she did not send for him, because she wished to make purchases in the antique shops accompanied only by Rina. On other days she enjoyed going out alone, because of her interest in the confusion and restlessness of the multitude in the streets of Madrid. Again, some travellers from her own country would be passing through, and she had to accept their invitations, spending some time with them away from her young companion.

During these absences, Florestan began to consider himself in the same fix as Arbuckle. He went, like him, to occupy an armchair in the hall of the hotel, and to justify himself in his own mind, he said that he did it by habit, because he had taken a liking to sitting beneath the glass dome,

seeing the cosmopolitan people who passed by the columns of the circular salon.

In reality, he remained hiding in his armchair, like a spy who pretends to be absorbed and watches everything out of the tail of his eye. He followed closely the comings and goings of the guests, with the hope that Concha Ceballos would appear soon, and that he would get another chance to talk to her.

Concerns and worries which he had ignored weeks before now annoyed or enraged him. Sometimes, when he accompanied Mrs. Douglas through the city, his eye would flash angrily with the desire to fall upon the people with his cane.

The widow was unable to pass unobserved in the streets close to the Puerta del Sol, where the pavements are always full and one has to walk with a slow step. Women of great stature do not abound in Spain, and the average man there feels an instinctive admiration for a tall woman, self-sufficient, with an athletic carriage and agile walk. Consequently, the passage of Queen Calafia seemed to leave behind a stream of sexual desire. Most thought she was too slim for her ample height; but even so their minds seethed with salacious and improbable pictures, which expressed their inevitable desires for the kind of love story that seems most manly when it is most brutish.

Divining by her look that she was a foreigner, they went on admiring and desiring her, without any scruples; thinking they were not found out, they revelled in these fantasies. The woman born

in Monterey dropped her eyes a little, her upper lip curled, she paled slightly; and then she went on, pretending to have noticed nothing. Sometimes she really did fail to understand, in spite of her knowledge of the language; some of these men expressed *their enthusiasm in words so extraordinarily vile, of such unspeakable origin, that she had never heard them.*

All this made Florestan suffer a new torture. He had crossed through the same streets accompanied by Doña Amparo and Consuelito, without hearing anything of the sort. But now he went with a foreigner—a woman who by her physical aspect, her manner of dressing, and her movements, differed from the women of his country; and the difference seemed to inflame the fleshly longings of the passers-by.

“Ignorant fools! Dirty blackguards!” the young man would protest in a low voice.

And he did not dare to say more, because Mrs. Douglas continued her walk feigning indifference, as though she had not heard the words these men would mutter as they passed her.

During his long waits in the hotel, on the afternoons when he watched for a chance to meet the widow, he did not enjoy the consolation of being accompanied by Arbuckle. Sometimes he remained alone whole hours. On one occasion he saw Casa Botero enter the hall. The latter, after looking on all sides and noticing Balboa, hastened to retire, pretending not to have seen him.

On other afternoons some studio companions of

and depression; the flesh of his face seemed as though it were crumbling, like a wall that is going to fall down. He spoke little, keeping himself on the edge of external existence, without deciding to leap into it, as if an obscure force held him back in the world of unrealities.

The son showed less concern. His calmness was doubtless because his constant contact with the sick man did not permit him to see the alarming changes in him.

"It is his improved movie machine which keeps Papa more and more preoccupied all the time. The apparatus and his lamp are all right; what bothers him now is the job of inventing a paper transparent enough for the ribbon. No material lets the light through cleanly. . . . Come up. It does him good to see you."

Soon the two men, without knowing how, began to speak about Mrs. Douglas. The Professor made excuses, as if he were in her presence, or as if Florestan were an envoy of hers. He repeated the reasons he had given in the letter he had sent with the romantic novel. The examining tribunal occupied the greater part of his afternoon; to say nothing of his articles for a historical review, and other works less worthy of mention.

Mascaro on this occasion thought to add confidentially new reasons to justify his staying away.

"Before, when Arbuckle was to be met, I liked to go there. That Yankee is an excellent friend, sound and decent—a sort of big child, although that doesn't keep me from thinking him every bit

a man, capable of undertaking the most stupendous adventures for love of dollars. It gives me pleasure to talk with him about the things he has seen in his country. Moreover, he is a fellow who knows how to listen: he expresses himself with modesty and respect towards those who understand more about certain things than he. . . . Nowadays, if one goes to see Mrs. Douglas, one runs into the like of Pero Botero, Casa Botero, or whatever they call him, a chap with no manners and very likely an adventurer besides. That smile of that upstart, his air of superiority, his desire to make fun of people—all annoy me, as if he were of another race. I don't know why she has him for a friend."

The Professor cherished an unpleasant memory of a certain night, the last time he had accepted an invitation to dine at the Ritz, with Mrs. Douglas and her companions.

"You will remember that night. That fellow is not even an acquaintance of mine. He met me there for the first time. He knew that I was in the government's pay to lecture on the history of Spain and her ancient colonies; and yet he dared to dispute with me on such a matter, making ridiculous misstatements. I did not call him an ass, out of respect for Mrs. Douglas, but I had better not go back; I lack patience. Moreover, his little bullying air at certain times, as if he were sparing all of us our lives! . . . I tell you I don't understand why Mrs. Douglas endures that type."

Florestan, stimulated by Mascaro's words, let

him know that the man inspired an equal dislike in him. Sometimes it was torture for him to accept the invitations of Mrs. Douglas and be forced to sit at the table with Casa Botero. He too found the man's assumption of superiority insufferable, as well as the condescension with which he treated him on account of his youth.

He could not be anything but an adventurer, as Arbuckle said. His marquise, if it really existed, was assuredly one of those given by the Pope. Balboa also scoffed at his fame as a swordsman, and his way of bringing up his former encounters in any conversation with men, as though as a warning that he was a man to be feared.

While the young man was saying all this, he suddenly lost his quiet athletic calmness. His eyes glittered, as if some recollection was making him angry, and he said arrogantly :

"I'm going to give that fellow a good thrashing. Be sure of this, Don Antonio, he's not going to leave Madrid before I've spoilt his looks. That's a certainty."

Then, noticing that the Professor was a little disturbed by the violence of his words, he tried to justify his attack.

"Just imagine: the other night, when Doña Concha was asking me about my father's work, this creature had the nerve to make fun of him, as if he were one of those absurd, half-crazy inventors that appear in the comedies. I answered him shortly and to the point, but Mrs. Douglas, who is very tactful, interrupted me and the con-

versation took another tack. Several times I caught the Marquis looking at me as if he were trying to throw a scare into me, but I stared back at him just the same way. He had better look out that I don't settle with him. . . . I tell you, Don Antonio, this brazen fellow has found somebody at last that he can't talk to that way!"

Mascaro thought it advisable to give prudent counsels to the youth. He ought to do as he did: be sparing of his visits to the widow until Casa Botero should be gone.

"He can't stay in Madrid much longer. He said that he had come only to see the pictures by Velásquez. . . . Perhaps he is intending to steal them and sell them, if, as seems likely, he is a sort of picture broker. . . . But when he sees how difficult the thing would be, he will go."

Florestan did not laugh at this quip of the Professor's and replied to his counsels with protesting words, as if he had proposed something absurd. . . . Leave Mrs. Douglas, when she would be completely in the toils of that adventurer? . . . It was his duty to stand by her; to free her by his presence from the dangers involved in her friendship with such a man.

"Besides, if I do as you say, he will think I am going because I am getting scared. Imagine my being scared by that fellow!"

The Professor kept turning over in his mind this conversation with Florestan during his visit to Balboa, and during the evening, when his University duties were over. He asked himself

with an anxiety that was ironic and at the same time sincere :

“What would my Doña Amparo have said if she had heard us ! She would have been full of new reasons for being angry at the American !” . . .

Don Antonio had been keeping his principal reason for not visiting Mrs. Douglas a secret. He wanted to go on quietly living his egoistic life as a “modest delver in History,” as he used to say. He was willing to concede anything in exchange for his wife’s not breaking into his reading times and his rests with her peppery protests at the dining table. If he did not see the lady, perhaps he could avoid having his wife talking at him all the time. But in spite of this sacrifice, he did not manage to escape Doña Amparo’s grumbling.

In Mascaro’s house Mrs. Douglas began to be considered as a calamity come from the other side of the Atlantic to bring misfortune upon the family—something extraordinary, gigantic, beyond all conceivable limits, like the fires, the railway catastrophes, and all the evil things of the New World.

Doña Amparo “could not let an invitation go without returning it,” and she had finally invited the two foreigners to her house for that Spanish luncheon her husband had suggested. Everything had gone well. The guests lavished their praises upon the cooking of the lady of the house. They saw that these courses resembled the “Spanish dishes” served in America as a grandfather resembles his children’s children. Doña Amparo’s

vanity as a housewife was gratified, but she was at the same time offended and embittered by having to work so hard in the service of the women she disliked.

As a jealous mother, she was worried about the future of her daughter, and too readily disposed to be severe and distrustful in her attitude toward her future son-in-law. For this reason she was the first to take any notice of Florestan's new conduct. His visits to his sweetheart became shorter and shorter. Every night up to this time, he had either been seeing her at his father's house or else coming to Mascaro's to spend the evening and twice a week he had attended the theatre with the family.

"Now the fine fellow puts on his evening clothes every night," protested Doña Amparo, "pokes his head in long enough to tell four lies to our poor daughter, and then marches off to dinner at the Ritz. I notice that he is satisfied enough to hang around those two women, but he treats us as if we belonged to a lower class. Some nights he doesn't even come, but sends a messenger from the hotel with a letter. . . . And you are so deep in those books of yours that don't even give us enough to eat, that you won't notice anything; you don't even look at our poor daughter who is more and more unhappy. . . ."

"Why woman, this thing is of no importance! It is something that will pass," replied Mascaro. "The boy ought to pay some attention to those ladies because they are friends of his father; and

a University Professor and respected by everybody, to go with your own daughter's fiancé to pay court to that woman who has heaven knows what idea of that great fool Florestan."

Don Antonio thought that this was his chance to protest manfully against her attitude, and Doña Amparo, considering that his words revealed a mental adultery in her husband, a secret admiration for the widow's beauty, broke out into insults:

"She's got you in her power, too. There's no doubt of it. You're as crazy about this foreigner as Florestan. The old man and the youngster admiring! I should like to see her without the patches and make-up she has because she is rich and can afford to pay for it all. . . . She's not much younger than you, don't you believe it! She and I are practically the same age—maybe just a few years' difference. But because I am the mother of a family, and not able to waste money, and what little I get I keep for the house——"

Here she left off pitying herself and lamenting her mediocrity to fall upon the absent woman with new force:

"I have nothing to say about the woman that goes about with her. She is a half-crazy old maid. I don't know what her face is made of, but it looks like a Chinaman's pickled in alcohol. But the other one. You try to defend her—a woman who smokes! . . . A woman who drives an automobile, in spite of the fact that she brings a chauffeur with her from America! . . ."

The Professor protested:

"Many women in Madrid smoke. And as far as driving cars is concerned, most of them don't do it because they can't, but they will come to it some day. What has all this to do with a woman's honour?"

Doña Amparo was not listening to him. She kept breaking forth into the clamour of an upset mother, to which was joined a certain personal rancour which she herself was not able to explain; against the rivalry of a woman brought up in a very different way; and an instinctive envy because she herself could not enjoy such an abundance of good things.

"I know more about her than you think. People have told me a lot of things. She can't go out on the street without almost starting a riot. Men are such fools that when they see a woman as tall as a cart-pole, who walks like a man and goes dressed in outlandish clothes, they trail her like dogs. They tell me that she doesn't like our customs; that she objects because she sometimes hears ugly words. Do they talk that way to me? I hope I'm more of a lady than she is!"

She hesitated, like one who has involuntarily made a misstatement, and then hastened to add:

"And if they did, I should keep quiet, as an honest woman ought to do who doesn't want to make trouble for the man who is with her and is afraid that she will make him come to blows with the insolent crowd. But since that lady has so many admirers, it probably would delight her to see them mixed up in brawls and squalls. She

time he plays at the club," or, "We shall surely find him at the house of La Fulana." And when he was found, he would take the matter in hand in a business-like fashion, handing out a card bearing several written lines for the gardener of his estate, always the same :

"Two gentlemen, with several of their friends, are going to kill each other in an affair of honour. Treat them as if it were I myself."

Luckily, the two gentlemen rarely would kill each other, leaving the place unhurt after exchanging several pistol-shots or upon being slightly scratched by a sword or a sabre. But this did not prevent the Lord of the Manor from believing in the likelihood that each pair he sent to his gardener would fight to the death.

Alaminos, whose property, famous in the history of the duel, was called by many the "Manor-House of Duels," had never fought. His friendliness and his understanding smile protected him from this danger. In spite of his carefree life, he was a man of religious convictions, and was sure that Providence concerned itself seriously in duels in order to intervene in certain cases.

"Miracles—stupendous happenings—have been seen at my house!" he would exclaim.

And he would go on to tell of stabs that should have been mortal and failed to be so by the fraction of an inch, of bullets that turned and followed the curve of a rib without touching the heart or any vital organ. His Manor-House, once inhabited by guests, to which he went only on days when there

were duels between famous adversaries or for lunch with entertaining people, had given him a fame almost equal to that of a politician or a great artist. Many times the personage who was head of the government, on meeting him at the theatre or a fair, would greet him like an old friend:

“Hello, dear Alaminos!”

He remembered the fighting at the country-house at the beginning of his career, when he had been a reporter or a plain lawyer.

They had all spent a few minutes of their lives in that decayed old Manor. Fifty years ago it had been a handsome country-house—one of those used in winter by the rich families of Madrid, before it was yet the general custom to travel to the Spanish coast at Cantabrico or Biarritz. But at the present time it was a great house with scaly rose-coloured sides and great eaves. It was surrounded by a conglomeration composed of a long-neglected garden, a half-dried-up orchard, and long avenues of poplars.

Mascaro had been in the “Manor-House of Duels.” Once he had acted as second to a former comrade of his student days, who had since taken up journalism and propaganda for the political revolution. When this friend had a duel, as the outcome of a certain polemic he wrote for the press, he thought it would be decorative to designate for his assistant in this meeting a Professor of the University. Four shots into the air were the result of the encounter, but it gave Mascaro the opportunity of meeting “*El simpático Alaminos*”

who had considered his presence at the house necessary, because it was a duel between "intellectuals."

While Mascaro was recalling all this in one section of his mind, he was giving the rest of his attention to the rapid explanations the young man was giving him.

He had been one of Florestan's two seconds, but he did not really know the cause of the quarrel. Balboa had sought out the two of them simply to consult with the representatives of the Marquis of Casa Botero; they were to agree to everything that was proposed.

"According to what he told us, last night on leaving the Ritz, he had a difference with this Marquis, who is half-Italian or half-Roumanian, I don't exactly know which. Florestan, although he seems like a quiet boy, is quick to strike when he is angry, and he knocked the gentleman down. He asked us not to discuss that: he was the aggressor and took the whole responsibility. Besides, since the Marquis is a man of arms, he wanted to show by completely accepting his terms that he was not afraid of him. The only thing he demanded of us was secrecy. There must be some woman in the background, and we have all kept quiet about the whole thing."

Then he described the encounter:

"Florestan, who is very strong, and doesn't know what fear is, attacked impetuously. He didn't pay much attention to his defence; the only thing that he wanted was to wound his opponent.

I don't know whether you know what sword-fighting is like. I think it is a weapon requiring reserve: very advantageous for the man who looks out carefully for his defence, but fatal for the aggressive one who is blind with rage. From the very first I could see what was going to happen. Florestan's adversary, who is a swordsman and whose face throughout the encounter wore a satirical smile that had a touch of grimness about it, simply defended himself, several times taking a step back, until Florestan becoming more and more imprudent and on the offensive, finally thrust himself upon the other's weapon."

The young man divined the anxious questioning in the Professor's eyes, which looked at him roundly.

"His wound is not hopeless, but the doctors consider that he is in great danger. They will not let us move him; they are afraid of some complication. These sword wounds, which look so slight and insignificant, turn out to be the most dangerous. The encounter was at two in the afternoon. I left the house a little after four. The doctors think that he will have a high fever to-night. The poor fellow is staying there with pleasure, because he prefers that to our having him carried home. The only thing that he is concerned about is keeping it from his father. The first thing he did after they treated him and put him to bed was to call me and say: 'Go and see Don Antonio Mascaro at this time. He can straighten out everything.' And since you were in

class I waited here at this door, determined not to move until I saw you come out."

Divining again in the Professor's eyes a curiosity slow in formulating itself in words on account of his emotion, the second added :

"The wound is in his chest."

Don Antonio started to go, indicating to the other with a movement of his head that he was to follow him.

"No ; Don Antonio, get in here."

And he pointed to a taxi which had been waiting at the curb for the last hour.

CHAPTER VIII

In which is related what took place at the "Manor-House of Duels" and at the Palace Hotel.

WHEN the Professor entered the Palace Hotel, there was running through his mind a protest, or to speak more precisely, an indignant complaint which made him recall many others emitted by the wrathful voice of Doña Amparo :

"What trouble this woman has brought upon us !"

And immediately another part of his mind was filled with the other side of the case :

"But she knows nothing about it ; she is not directly to blame for what has happened. What will she say when she finds out ?"

The same contradictory emotions existed in Mascaro's mind in considering the recent happenings. He was a man of peace and had no liking for other combats than those of history, seen on the pages of books, and accompanied by the trumpeting of rhetoric. But at the same time, the imaginative Mascaro, who had so often created within himself fables of adventures and amours, felt proud of

playing an active part in a novel unrolled into reality, although it was turning out to be less agreeable and extraordinary than those which he invented for his personal pleasure. This did not seem strange to him : stories one lives often present the inconvenience of being more prosaic than the ones imagined ; but the present occurrence missed going aground on the common-place, and well deserved to be considered exciting.

He had seen Florestan at the "House of Duels," in an ancient bed, and cared for by two men : one of the doctors who had been present at the encounter and the youth's other second. The gardener's wife obeyed the doctor's orders with a rustic heaviness, not unmixed with a certain disdain, as if to give them to understand that she was accustomed to deeds of this sort.

The doctor, on seeing Don Antonio enter, took him to one side.

"Talk to him as little as possible. His fever is increasing. It is almost certain that he will be delirious by nightfall. It is not the wound that bothers me ; I am afraid that an internal inflammation will set in. But if two days pass without that complication, our man will be safe."

The wounded man, on recognizing Don Antonio, greeted him with a pallid smile, and tried to put out his hand. The Professor, seeing in Florestan's eyes that the boy had something to say to him, bent over, putting his ear near Florestan's mouth, as if he were receiving a confession.

"Dad must not know this."

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Don Antonio raised his voice, as if he could give him strength in that way.

"He shall not know of it. I will tell him some kind of a story to explain your absence. Besides, your wound is unimportant. . . . To-morrow or next day you will certainly be able to come home."

Florestan made a gesture of indifference, considering such amiable falsehoods useless. He went on speaking to his visitor in a low voice:

"Please also see to it that . . . the lady does not know what has happened. It might displease her, and I don't want her to feel annoyed with me."

"I will see to it. . . . Do you want anything else?"

And as if Florestan finally remembered something the forgetting of which filled him with remorse, he added:

"Manage also to keep them from finding out at your house."

Mascaro made a gesture to indicate to the young man that it was not necessary to say any more. But to himself, he vigorously protested at this tardy memory.

"He almost let me go without remembering his fiancée! My poor daughter!"

While he was returning to the city, violently shaken up by the bumps of the automobile passing over deep holes in the road, he decided only partly to keep the promises he had made to the wounded boy.

He would deceive Balboa with some made-up story. That would be easy for him and was necessary besides. The poor man might easily die from a violent emotion: his heart was incapable of resisting a shock. But why should he keep the facts from that woman? . . . It was her fault—although not directly so—that two men wanted to kill each other, and that one of them was now in danger of dying. And she must know nothing of it! . . .

This secrecy seemed to him an absurd precaution, contrary to the rules of construction of those imaginative edifices with which he ornamented the honest, commonplace emptiness of his inner life. The natural thing was for Queen Calafia to be informed that two knights had fought for her. That Amazon's heart was more substantial than the one belonging to Florestan's father, and there was no fear of its being mortally affected by any such news.

There existed also in him a morbid desire to see how the woman would take the relation of the event, what emotion she would show, and what would be her words of remorse. Now that she had been responsible for his injury she could bear at least a part of the anxiety and the disquieting pain of the young man's condition. In any case, she would find out about the duel from some boast of the victor.

"That damnable Botero," he went on thinking, "will not miss the chance to brag about his good luck, and there's no telling how he may twist

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things! . . . The best thing is for me to tell the story myself."

Finding at the hotel that Mrs. Douglas was in her room, he asked them to telephone that he wished to see her. The widow received her friends in the drawing-room of her apartment on the second floor.

This room had an ample balcony, looking out on the Paseo del Prado, as the Professor knew. It was furnished with a set of gold and red chairs, its walls were whitewashed, and as an individual touch, to brighten it and make it look less like a rented room, it had several pictures of Spanish costumes, ancient *albanicos*, large mantles from Manila, old etchings, small embossed chests, everything the widow had been picking up on her visits to the antique shops of Madrid and the neighbouring provinces.

When Mrs. Douglas learned that the Professor wished to see her, she eagerly gave orders to have him come up. This visit, she felt, had something to do with the vague uneasiness she had been feeling for several hours.

Florestan, it had been agreed, was to have come to call for her that afternoon. And after waiting in vain, she had gone out for the afternoon to drive through the Retiro and the Castellana, with no company but Rina, bored at the slow passage of vehicles one after another, like water out of a pump, along the length of the two boulevards. The young man's inexplicable absence had made her recall the dinner the night before at the Ritz

with Florestan, Casa Botero, and a family of Americans who were stopping in Madrid to visit the gardens of Seville in spring.

The two men had talked very little, and kept looking at each other with a certain intensity. At least, that was how she remembered it; but she was not sure. She had been obliged to give her attention to the other guests, and she could not be certain of their words or take account of their state of mind. She seemed to remember that Casa Botero presently had said something with that perverse smile that he used to accompany words which were coldly aggressive. But she immediately rejected this memory, thinking it but a deceitful invention of her present mood.

As soon as Mascaro came into the room, his solemn manner and the tone of his greeting brought back the uneasiness which had tormented her during the afternoon. But now this uneasiness was immediately changed into certainty, as her feminine intuition divined the Professor's thoughts.

She came very near saying, with the idea of avoiding a long preamble: "Never mind; I know all that you are going to tell me." Therefore, she showed no emotion when her visitor, dispensing with useless introduction, simply announced:

"Florestan is wounded."

She had known it for some seconds and her feeling of surprise was by now considerably weakened. She had also known, by presentiment, who had wounded Florestan. It could only be "the other." And she listened to all the Professor was telling her

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with her head bent and her gaze on the tips of her shoes.

He felt somewhat disconcerted on seeing that after he finished his account the lady remained silent, looking at the floor. No tears or signs of surprise, not even a slight moisture of her eyes. She did not seem to have understood.

Realizing how strange her attitude must seem to him, she raised her eyes and murmured plaintively, as if proffering an excuse :

"I am not a woman. I don't know how to cry. : : : I have never cried !"

She again fastened her eyes on the floor. A long silence followed, which she presently cut short by rising briskly to her feet and looking at one of the several doors of the room. Mascaro remembered that this was the door leading into her companion's room.

"And I sent Rina out in the car a little while ago to make some purchases !"

Without explaining the apparent incoherence between such words and what her visitor had just told her, she made a gesture for him to wait for her and opened the other door leading into her bedroom.

A minute later, she appeared with a dark hat on her head, putting on her gloves hastily.

"Let's go," she said in a voice of command. "We will get a taxi downstairs."

The Professor tried to protest. He understood her wish well enough ; but how did she dare to

give him orders without first finding out whether he was willing ?

Mrs. Douglas repeated silently the same order with the simple gesture of a person accustomed to the obedience of all around her, and went out of the room without looking to see whether Don Antonio was following her.

At the door of the Palace, the taxi-driver caught the address given curtly by Mascaro, without asking for further directions. "To the Manor-House of Alaminos!" He did not need to hear more. . . . Everybody in Madrid knew where that was !

The drive began under the light of a burning sun. They passed through the streets of the workers' suburbs, behind the shops and offices of the Mediodia railroad station ; then a dusty road between the walls of factories and warehouses ; and finally, strips of open country, bare the greater part of the year, but covered with green by the generous spring, which reaches the most humble corners and ends of the earth. They also passed by a small, seemingly abandoned cemetery with cypresses, scaly fences, and old walls. All that Mrs. Douglas saw under the greyish light of the waning afternoon suggested death to her.

When they got out in the yard of the Manor, the Professor, out of consideration for his companion, thought it necessary to take precautions.

"You wait here. I will go in first, to find out if any curious people have come. I will come back and let you know when you can enter."

But the widow, in anguish on account of her forebodings, stepped in front of him, as if she had not understood. An irresistible authority, which reminded Mascaro of Doña Amparo's, obliged him to follow her. But there was a difference between the two women : his wife was excited and clamorous in her rages, and her gloomy moods ; while this lady, as the intensity of her emotion increased, sank into a silence which he called " energetic."

Don Antonio went before her to serve as her guide on going up the stairs of the house, and on a landing on the first floor he ran into the same doctor with whom he had spoken two hours before.

" He has a fever ; a very high fever—as I expected. It is useless to see him, he will not know you—he will not understand what you say to him."

But the young doctor, seeing the distinguished bearing of the lady who had just come up the last steps pushing on behind Mascaro, made an inclination of his head accompanied by a gesture of gallant courtesy. " A duel, a wounded man, and a lady coming to visit him, pale, moved, exerting at the same time a greater inner force to keep herself calm ! " . . . It was useless to oppose her entrance. He might as well let her come in, because in this way he permitted actually to happen something which he had so many times admired in novels and plays.

With a sense of direction that seemed supernatural, Concha advanced for the first time in that house where she had never been, travelling straight to the bedroom occupied by the wounded man.

Perhaps she was guided by her sense of smell and followed the strong odour of antiseptics ; perhaps she obeyed the obscure drawing of her subconscious mind.

When she stopped a few seconds at the bedroom door, Mascaro, who was behind her, thought she seemed taller than ever. With one hand she fumbled for the knob of the door, as if she needed assistance. The Professor stepped between her and the portal, where he could see her pale face suddenly drawn with emotion, her eyes that seemed to be round now. Dark, blank, expressionless, they looked at the white, old bed, the head buried in the pillow and the motion of the bedclothes, which disclosed the palpitation of an invisible bosom.

“ Poor boy ! . . . What an outrage ! ”

She repeated these words over and over, as if her emotion, rancorous and concentrated, were incapable of finding new modes of expression. She thought of “ the other,” enraged on comparing his skill as a man of arms with the confident and inexpert valour of the youth. To her, that duel was a murder. Her hatred for injustice and unfairness, a virtue which people in her country display with aggressiveness, returned to move her now with vengeful desires. Alas that she could not get her hands on the scoundrel at that moment ! . . .

She approached the bed on tiptoe, as if she feared to awaken the patient ; but the doctor spoke loudly, confident that Florestan could not hear him.

Confused by the unexpected presence of this

handsome woman who had the air of a great lady and who evoked in him images of women he had read of in the past, the doctor tried to arouse her interest, breaking into long explanations of the boy's condition and his own diagnosis of the case for her special benefit.

The widow heard his voice like the echo of a distant cascade. She was not really aware of what he was saying. It was impossible for her to concentrate her attention, and she was, besides, unable to understand the professional words with which he embellished his account. She came to understand only that the doctor was not sure of saving the patient, that he was in a most critical condition, and that everything depended on what happened after the fever receded. An internal inflammation might follow. Until two days had passed, it would be impossible to say with certainty. And she, who had taken her position next to the bed, resting her knees against the soft edge of the mattress, went on murmuring lightly, with her eyes fixed on his feverish face :

"Poor boy! . . . What an outrage!"

Finally, the doctor left off his explanations and the Professor his questions about the patient's condition—both exhausted.

The silence seemed to awaken the widow and make her realize the oppressive vacancy about her. She looked around, examining with authoritative eyes in the rapidly fading twilight which came in at the windows, the walls, the furniture, and the occupants.

Don Antonio thought suddenly that she was a dual woman. She had the detailed and searching despotism of a housewife. At the same time, the light in her eyes made the Professor think of the captains of industry who manage factories as big as towns, organize fleets which are on every sea, or rouse to activity the more obscure corners of the globe. She asked questions coldly, wrinkling her forehead and presenting her profile in order to hear better, as if she were making investigations concerning a new business deal in which she was thinking of risking a great part of her fortune. She wanted to know how the care of the patient was going to be organized; what she could count on in that half-abandoned house, far from the city, which contained people only on afternoons when there were duels. There she lacked the soft hands, the attention to details, the sweet thoughtfulness of a woman.

"The gardener's wife has helped me up to now," said the doctor.

And in fact, this countrywoman, moved to curiosity by the presence of such a fine lady, had abandoned the kitchen, going up to the first floor to examine her at close range. She remained at the entrance of the bedroom, smiling, half-constrained and half-familiar, at the visitor. They were the only two women in that house where only men were in the habit of entering, and this seemed to arouse in her a sense of common solidarity.

Mrs. Douglas looked at her affably and protectingly, judging her to be a good faithful soul; but

then something more was necessary than the services of a countrywoman who was obliged to attend to the wants of her family as well as those of the sick man.

"One of Florestan's seconds," announced Don Antonio, after having listened to the doctor, "has gone to Madrid to bring a nurse."

The widow approved with a movement of her head, and after a short reflection said, as if she were giving an order :

"The nurse will be necessary ; she will set me free to spend more time with the patient."

As she said this, she mechanically took off her gloves and turned up her sleeves so as to begin work at once. Then she walked about the room, acquainting herself with the quality and the nature of the several bottles, boxes, and bandages which lay in disorder on the marble tops of the two old consoles with blurred and cloudy mirrors.

The Professor took advantage of the doctor's withdrawal to go up to her and say in a low voice :

"But we can't have this ! Think of what will be said if you stay here ! Don't be afraid that he will be poorly attended. . . . There is a little disorder now, but everything will be straightened out this very night."

She did not hear him, and such was the energetic decision registered on her face, that Don Antonio thought he must be looking at the real Queen Calafia. Again she had fastened her eyes on that man menaced with death who remained insensible

to what was going on about him, giving no other sign of life than his painful breathing. "Poor boy! . . . What a way to be left abandoned! . . ."

It would be impossible for her to live away from him in endless anxiety because of the picture of neglect, carelessness, and danger that would ever be present in her mind.

Later, she looked at the Professor with a sorrowful expression of reproach:

"Do you think that I am not able to care for a wounded man because I am rich and live in luxury?"

Her eyes seemed to be sorry for her hearer's ignorance, but he protested. The strength and dignity with which the women of her country meet life, their desire to fight for themselves, adapting themselves marvellously to all the changes and rebuffs which the ups and downs of existence bring with them, were well known to him. He knew that for most American millionairesses it is not a matter of life or death to busy themselves in the kitchen, in evening gowns, wearing on their bosoms a pearl necklace worth a fortune, when the cook has left at the last minute. All manage to possess the manual ability, the power to face facts, the patient energy, which during thousands of years have been the privilege of men, giving them supremacy over the other sex.

Mascaro was sure that it was not going to be an extraordinary undertaking for Mrs. Douglas to spend days and days in that big house, taking care of an invalid. There in Monterey, during her first

youth, when she was not even rich, she had known situations as bad and worse.

"But that is not what bothers me. What they will say if you settle down here. . . ."

It was impossible for the Professor to continue his admonitions.

"See to it that his father doesn't find out about this," she interrupted him. "Tell him that I have taken him on a trip for several days; that we have gone . . . wherever you like! The important thing is that poor Balboa shall not suffer a violent emotion. Don't worry about me. I have lived enough to know how far we should govern our conduct by what people say."

She was silent for a long time while she organized in her mind, with all the precision of an orderly woman, the best plan for the care of the patient.

"As I may be here for some time," she continued, "it is better for me to go back to the hotel myself and bring the things I can't get along without. Besides, I need to see Rina and give her my orders. Who knows when I shall leave this house again! . . . You, Don Antonio, would not know how to carry out my wishes no matter how many explanations I should give you. Women understand us quicker and better."

She asked the doctor not to leave the patient until her return. Her eyes caressed Florestan's face once more, from a distance. It was deceptively red from the fever, while from his mouth, contracted with pain, issued faint murmurs which occasionally would form an entire word.

"Poor boy! . . . What an outrage!"

Then she wrenched herself away from this contemplation and went out of the room, motioning to her companion to follow her.

While the automobile sped toward Madrid, she spoke to the Professor with the tone of a superior giving orders. She dropped him before reaching the hotel so that he could immediately go to Ricardo Balboa's house, before the father would be upset by his son's absence.

"Tell him that Mrs. Douglas, who, as he very well knows, is very capricious, half-crazy, has all at once felt the desire to go to a city very far off—very far off!—and obliged Florestan to accompany her, without giving him time to write a letter. . . . As you were present, Florestan charged you to let his father know. This trip will last some weeks, and may very well extend to a month or more. It is so easy for Mrs. Douglas to change her ideas and prolong an excursion! . . . In short, you are a wise man, and will say what is most convenient to keep the poor man from suspecting the truth. Are we agreed on that?"

Near her hotel, the widow got out of the car, while Mascaro went on to the part of the town in which were his house, and that of Balboa.

Mrs. Douglas had not given a single thought to his wife and daughter. As if, for them, Florestan did not exist! . . . Fortunately, Don Antonio managed to decide in time what part of the lying story intended for the father he would be able to pass on to his own family.

When Mrs. Douglas entered her drawing-room, Rina jumped up, letting fall the book she had been reading to while away her impatient waiting.

"Let's dine at once. Perhaps you don't remember that we are going to the theatre to-night."

"You dine; I have no appetite; and as soon as you have finished, come up. You must pack a suitcase for me with the most necessary things. I am going to live away from here for a few days. You will come to see me and return to Madrid for things I want and get my letters. . . . Not a word to anyone. Eat and come back at once."

As soon as she was alone, she entered her bedroom and passed into other adjoining rooms, opening wardrobes to get together underclothes and toilet articles.

While she was hunting up these things, her subconscious mind made her repeat mechanically, in a low voice, the same words her compassion and her wrath had put together at the first instant:

"Poor boy! . . . What an outrage!"

It was the hotel's most silent hour. The incessant rumbling of the vehicles in the neighbouring streets was heard through the closed walls and windows, like a distant roll of thunder. The wide corridors, with their low ceilings, like those on a transatlantic liner, were deserted. All the life of the building was concentrated near the ground, in the dining-rooms and at the bar. Even the servants on the upper floors, taking advantage of the absence of the guests who were dining out, had withdrawn to other parts of the hotel.

Mrs. Douglas stopped in her packing on hearing someone knock at the entrance door to her rooms. It was an insistent, tenacious knocking and yet somewhat discreet, as if he who knocked feared to be heard in the adjacent rooms.

Thinking that Rina was sending her a message by some servant, Mrs. Douglas went to the door and drew the inner bolt.

In spite of the emotions she had suffered an hour before which had made her now almost insensible to all feeling, she burst into an exclamation of surprise on recognizing the man standing in the door-way. It was Casa Botero.

Instead of stepping back to let him enter or remaining motionless to shut off his entrance, she advanced in such a manner that Casa Botero had to retreat, leaving the two in the corridor.

It was a movement of instinctive repulsion, as if the man's entrance might bring a danger of contagion into her rooms.

Both were under one of the hemispheres of frosted glass which spread their veiled light from the ceiling. The Marquis smiled with a friendly expression which seemed hateful to her, apologizing at the same time for his audacity in coming to her door without permission.

He had asked many times for Mrs. Douglas that afternoon at the hotel desk, always receiving the answer that she still had not returned. Then, near nightfall, they had told him that she had gone out with a gentleman. Now he had seen Rina below, and fearing that the widow was vexed with him

to the point of avoiding his presence, he considered it incumbent upon him to give her certain explanations. The Californian listened to him immovably, becoming more and more rigid. Extending her arms along her body, letting her shoulders droop, and with her chin well forward, she held her eyes on him with an aggressive fixity. Her silence and that look upset Casa Botero, but he immediately recovered his customary assurance, as of a good fellow well satisfied with himself :

"I see that you know what happened this afternoon. I have told you on many occasions that the man who dares to be my rival is sentenced to death. I love you as no one else could love you, and if anyone crosses my path his days are numbered."

Concha Ceballos, always silent, advanced a few steps more ; and the other, instinctively, slowly, retreated down the middle of the corridor, without ceasing his explanations.

"I am not to blame. That clumsy boy wanted to match himself with me ! I have given him a lesson, and opened a buttonhole in his chest, which perhaps . . ."

He was not able to continue. Concha Ceballos, who at first seemed to have dilated with the violence of her surprise, suddenly contracted and hit out with one of her arms which until then had been tightly pressed to her body. Her hand left her thigh, and struck the face of the Marquis with terrific violence. He wavered under the force of the blow. His confusion was partly caused by

an intense surprise. It was a manly buffet, the blow of an athlete. . . . Could a woman hit like that ?

His confusion and his physical pain made him forget the sex of the adversary who had just rushed at him. He was, moreover, afraid that the blow would be repeated. The instinct of self-preservation made him raise his hands to defend himself.

The widow Douglas then cut his silence with a harsh laugh, like the striking of iron on flint. Her wish was fulfilled; this man treated her as an equal. . . . Now she closed her right fist as hard as a club. The left she placed before her face, with her elbow at an angle, as if putting her whole body under the protection of an invisible shield.

She advanced, striking out twice with her right arm. Her fist fell like a club on the man's face, smashing his nose and giving him a bloody mouth. The stone of one of the boxer's rings had cut the enemy's lips. His jawbone seemed to crack under a third blow, and down he went, trying with a futile agitation of arms and legs to reach his adversary and keep from falling.

He remained on his back on the floor : he tried to get up but could not. Queen Calafia with her body crouched, her arms up, and her fists tight, fixed on him her eyes, full of a cold cruelty ; she was prepared to repeat her blows just as soon as she saw him on his feet again. . . . But he finally dropped his head and fell flat on the soft strip of

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carpet down the centre of the passage, and letting out a groan, remained immovable.

Then the Amazon, with the implacable arrogance of vengeance, perhaps without paying attention to what she was doing and with her mind fixed on the other man, raised one foot and put its sharp high heel on the mouth of the fallen man.

CHAPTER IX

In which Queen Calafia is grateful for the invention of the automobile.

BARELY a week had gone by since Concha had moved into Alaminos' house ; but more than once, running her mind back over all that had happened, she imagined that she had been living in the place for months. Sometimes she came very near feeling she had been there always—forgetting the original reason for her undertaking such a responsibility.

At other times she remembered the restlessness of the first two nights she had spent in the house, long hours of anguish, during which she kept looking eagerly at the balcony windows, hoping to see them white under the livid light of the morning, as if with the dawn of a new day came the assurance that she could save Florestan's life. These two nights she had remained untouched by sleep and weariness, reading in an armchair, without being sure what she was reading, interrupting her occupation to pass a hand over the wounded man's forehead, replying with words of maternal tenderness to his feverish incoherencies.

The youth opened his eyes with momentary lucidity in the late hours of the night, looking wonderingly at the person bending over his bed.

"It is I," said Mrs. Douglas in a soothing voice. "It is I!"

But the invalid shut his eyes again, warned perhaps by a deep-lying instinct that this woman was the figure of a vision, the image of a dream, so that he could still see her with his eyes shut.

In the noonday hours, during which the patient was easiest, Rina and a nurse from a hospital in Madrid cared for him, while Concha, overcome by weariness, tried to sleep. But presently she would begin to worry, fearing that her substitutes were neglecting their duties, and then she would get up at once to relieve them, expecting on her return to find evidence of carelessness and laziness about the patient's room.

For many years she had not experienced a feeling of contentment equal to that she felt when the doctor said that the boy had passed the danger line at last, and that the internal inflammation which had been so serious a menace was now very unlikely. The robustness and the youth of the patient had hastened his recovery.

She found Florestan pale and feebler than before, without the deceptive brightness of the fever, but that weakness enabled him to appreciate better what was going on around him. His uncertain filmy eyes, the eyes of a person awakening from sleep, at once fixed themselves on Concha as she moved near his couch. First, his look rested upon

her hands, strong and well cared for, caressingly soft, which straightened and smoothed the bed-clothes: the wounded man thought he recognized them by the elegant and rose-coloured oval of the finger nails in the form of an almond, by the rings gleaming from the fingers. Then his look followed the length of her arms and the roundness of the breast, to rest finally on the two black eyes, with glints of gold, tearful with emotion, which seemed to go out to meet his eyes. Now he could not doubt that she was a real person. And she, divining his thought, said in a voice soft and far-away, like murmuring water:

“It is I. Yes, it is I!”

She had passed two nights near the bed of this delirious and wounded man, nights on which she had not dared to face the present too squarely—she had her duties to perform!—and had feared to think of the future lest she should see before her eyes the slow beating of the leaden wings of death. Now at last she would begin to enjoy the pleasures of an anxiously awaited convalescence.

There is no physical voluptuousness comparable to that felt by the sick person who returns to life and sees health in an altogether new light. An equal joy can be felt only by those who have defended him with their attentions, who fought death for him; as they support him on his first steps in a second life, they may taste an artist's pride before the glorious realization brought about by their efforts.

Mrs. Douglas, living in that great old house, where many of the elementary necessities of modern life were lacking, felt greater pleasure than in the most famous "palaces" of Europe in which she had been a guest year after year.

No one could come to disturb her delightful isolation with unexpected intrusions. The doctor, seeing the danger past, had to attend to his duties in the city, and visited the house only once a day.

Mascaro had not returned. He limited himself to looking up the doctor in Madrid to ask about the condition of the patient. He did not wish by his presence to seem to approve of the presence of Mrs. Douglas in the house with Florestan. The friend who had been Florestan's second presented himself once a day to ask if there were any errands in the city they wanted him to run for them.

When "*El simpático Alaminos*" heard that there was a wounded man in his house, he considered it necessary to visit him. It was "a duty between gentlemen and men of arms," as he said. But on finding the lady installed in his house, he was discreet, limiting himself to greeting her from a distance, and disappeared without letting her know who he was.

Presently, the gardener and his wife brought her a message from their master: Mrs. Douglas "was to use the whole house as if it was hers." The master had given them orders to obey her in everything. After this piece of thoughtfulness, Alaminos, always "*El simpático*" and open with

his friends, would say in secret to everyone he met—first swearing them to silence :

“ You know that foreign woman who drives her own car ? She is an American girl, nice, but a little old-maidish ; and at night she wears enough jewels at the Ritz to put out your eyes. Well, she has moved into my house to take care of a man who was wounded in a duel ! ”

There was a sort of honour to his house, and he couldn't keep quiet about it. It was simply stronger than his discretion. On his property many wounded men had been cured ; twice corpses had been carried out of the yard in whatever vehicle was handy, as if they were only unconscious, in order that they might then die for the second time in their own homes ; but never had a wounded man remained to live in the house, as if it were a hotel or a hospital, with a great lady attending him day and night.

For “ *El simpatico Alaminos* ” it would have been another cause for pride to know the state of mind of that stranger woman. Daily she found new charms in this big house, which was old without being ancient, monotonous, and sad without any unusual features, except the cold and exaggerated dimensions of its rooms.

This place she had moved into seemed very interesting to Mrs. Douglas : a drawing-room which was at the same time a bedroom, with mahogany furniture of the style affected by the bourgeoisie in Paris at the time of Louis Philippe, and a mahogany bed which, fortunately, had its

curtains, though they were dusty and full of moths. This drawing-room, like all the rooms unoccupied for a long time and not well ventilated, had an odour of dampness—it smelled of closeness and of age. The chairs wobbled on uncertain legs. During the night the woodwork creaked, and, magnified by the silence, the gnawing of the woodlice opening tunnels in the woody fibres sounded in the room. The mirrors uttered groans from within, as if through holes in vertical faces, as if all the images reflected for a century past were rushing forth.

On the walls were faded pictures that dated from the invention of the camera ; once black, they had now the reddish colour of diluted chocolate. Some of these represented ladies in ample festooned crinolines, like the upper half of an inflated balloon ; each lady had a rose in her right hand, and wore a small cloak with strings tied under the chin. Others were of gentlemen in old-time costumes, trousers ample in the legs and very narrow at the foot, gentlemen with moustaches and two-pointed beards ; and beside each gentleman, upon a column, stood a hat with an enormous crown. They probably were the ancestors of this master of the house. Of course, they had all died many years before, but Mrs. Douglas found the silent society of such phantoms full of charm.

All these gentlemen must have loved the ladies in crinolines. And they, eternally breathing the perfume of the rose they held in one hand, smiled at the men like women satisfied with life ; because

in this life they had all found a little thing, fragile, but forever fresh, which was called love. What wise and lovable people!

That abandoned garden, too, which was at once orchard and waste land, seemed more beautiful to her every morning. As she went down to it, new reasons for admiring it came out to meet her. In winter, this hard earth, rough and faded, would be repellent underfoot. Now the generous spring was warming its anæmic womb, causing it to bring forth familiar, lovely flowers on the terrace cultivated by the gardener, and covering the abandoned soil with a free, spontaneous vegetation.

She went through the paths or down the ancient avenues of the poplars with the old delight of her childhood in Monterey, when the last vestige of the riches of the Ceballos' disappeared on their heavily mortgaged ranch. With the skill of a woman born in the country, she combined the grasses and flowers of the garden to make a great bouquet, and came with it to the convalescent's room to offer it to him as a morning greeting. The youth breathed its perfume with delight while he looked at its bringer. His hands embraced the bundle of flowers; but doing this, they went in search of the hands that supported it, prolonging the contact in a long silence.

When the young man's period of delirium had come to an end, he had whiled away the tedium of his long periods in bed striving to recall many of the intriguing images of his delirium: in doing this he tried to mix into his imaginings things

which might have been true, which he thought he had seen through the fever.

He had felt no extraordinary surprise on finding Mrs. Douglas, delightfully substantial and real, near his bed. He was sure that he had seen her before, in lucid moments of his delirium, soothing him with maternal caresses. A tingling sensation of fresh murmuring water passed through his feverish body when he felt the contact of her soft hands and heard far off, very far off, the music of her voice. He had seen her face and felt her hands. This much seemed to him indisputable; but he hesitated to call up other less certain memories of his delirium.

He believed that he had been repeatedly kissed on the forehead during this delirium; kisses from lips arched downward by pity and sorrow; kisses of a weeping mouth which did not seem at all like the mouth of happy hours. For then it would laugh, and its outstretched corners would go up as if they were rosy wings, or as if they formed a bow which still quivered at either end.

At certain moments Mrs. Douglas felt a desire to be alone, so that she could taste to the full that inner intoxication she now felt, which filled her with new energies, made her see people and things in new shapes and colours. And trusting the convalescent to Rina or to the other woman, she would go down to the rambling garden, which had become a place of seductive enchantments for her. Its uncared-for vegetation, its isles of beeches, in which birds found refuge, fleeing from the neigh-

bouring waste land, offered a favourable atmosphere for her ideas and desires.

She had found a new flavour in life. Until a few weeks since, it had seemed meaningless to her, with a material finality drawn-out and monotonous, not worth the trouble of being taken very seriously. She felt ashamed to remember how she had been living : travelling, eating, putting on new clothes ; her pride flattered by the envy or the admiration of other women ; attending entertainments that for the most part were boring and did not arouse her interest, as they had when she first came to Europe ; enjoying the material voluptuousness of being rich, the certainty of being able to achieve her desires, the vanity of power, the tranquillity of a future protected from the humiliations of poverty, worry about money, the caprices of misfortune : that was all. And she had been able to live thus, content ? . . .

Now she had something that luxury and riches had never given her.

"I know what I am living for," she thought. "I know for the first time what it is I want."

Love had always seemed to her something vulgar and deceitful, useful only to entertain the poor and the sickly, consoling them for their inferior position, helping them to bear their misfortunes. It also served as a pretext to others to disguise their corruptions with a false beauty. But the strong, those who form the true aristocracy, are aware of the deceitfulness of all this and avoid it, thinking little of this thing called love.

She had desired to be strong, and felt the pride of belonging to the select group of superior people. It was a distinction in life to show oneself superior to love ; a calamity equal to war and great plagues ; a misfortune that battered upon the whole human flock ; a sentiment useful only for beings lacking personality, who were unable to follow the road of life alone, on their own feet, and needed to support themselves on another person, or on several other persons, in order to come to the end of their journey ; a delight which everybody talked about, although it was lost as soon as consummated ; a sweet emotion which brought tears from women with the soul of a modiste.

But now, living in a half-abandoned house near one of the ugliest suburbs in Madrid, she thought herself born to a new and richer life, finding the thoughts which had borne her company for the greater part of her existence to be egotistic and perverse, ashamed of them as if they were friends, unmasked at the last hour as terrible criminals.

She reckoned it stupid to have pretended to be immune from love : it was a general passion, and all the people in the world, powerful and humble, sought to know it, if only for once in their lives. The grand passions that ennobled our life were simple, elemental, and universal, cutting through barriers of class and privilege. Of course, love usually turned out to be vulgar and laughable seen from a distance, because most human beings were vulgar and laughable ; but the chosen beings who formed the aristocracy of life presented a brilliant exception :

as soon as they touched love they ennobled it. Besides, why should she think herself different from other mortals? . . . She had maintained herself too long in her old, proud isolation—it had at last become a weary privilege, like that of the monsters who felt proud of the terror and the vacancy they saw round about them. Poor Rina, in her mental poverty, had seen more clearly the true finality of existence, and therefore sought with great diligence that love which evaded her steps.

Concha remembered the ancient novel sent by Mascaro, which she had read a few days before. Queen Calafia, satisfied in her strength and her warrior's chastity, abhorred men, fighting battles with them and killing them when they entered her kingdom. But after she had seen the calm beauty of that young hero, the Knight of the Great Serpent, she asked aid from the gods, feeling the forged plates of the armour of her austerity dropping one by one from her soul.

The Sovereign of California had shown herself ready to disown her native land and deny her beliefs that she might not lose the beloved man. Concha too had cast off her past life, and thrown aside all the conventions and laws of society. She was hiding, as if she had committed a bad action, to care for a wounded man. . . . What would she not do for Florestan?

Spring sang in her heart; a spring more beautiful than that which the land under her feet was bringing into flower. She was going to love twofold, with a love greater than that of other women. The difference

in age, instead of causing her uneasiness, roused her to a sudden optimism and pride. She could be toward Florestan at the same time a lover and almost a mother. Her love was equally composed of passion and tenderness. But immediately her woman's coquetry impelled her to modify this privilege; a little melancholy, which the passage of time conferred upon her.

After all, she was young; because she had never known love, she came to the first passion of her life with the simplicity of the trembling neophyte who treads the threshold of the temple charged with mystery. Her soul was that of a virgin. Others, proud of their untouched flesh, had spirits pawed over and worn out by sharp dealings with love. She was in love for the first time. Her husband had been a friend, older, knowing more of life than she, a travelling companion, who watched and protected her. She cherished a strong regard for his memory; in their treatment of each other there had always been graciousness and tenderness, but not love.

If love had ever touched her life—and this memory made her smile—it had been in the first flush of her puberty, when the Engineer Balboa was in California. The father had passed through the morning of her life as a silent symbol. That fleeting interest he had aroused in the little girl of Monterey was the unconscious forerunner of another, greater and more lasting, which the full bloom of her own person had inspired.

It did not occur to Concha Ceballos to doubt for

a single instant that her love was accepted by that man who was lying wounded on his cot, near a balcony toward which she instinctively looked as she continued her ramblings.

She had divined the love in Florestan's eyes a good deal before she was convinced of the existence of her own—when the young man accompanied her in the streets of Madrid or drove beside her in the automobile through the dusty roads to visit ancient cathedrals and abandoned monasteries.

Disturbed by the importance he was acquiring in her life and the growing necessity of coming to an understanding with him, she had intended to see him less frequently. Then she repented of her resolution when she noted Florestan's disorganized sadness, like the dismay of an abandoned child. Not a single word of love had passed between them ; but the young man, seeing that she avoided his presence, had shown the same desperation as if he were the victim of an infidelity. Besides, his hatred for Casa Botero and this unexpected duel, were as good as a declaration of love.

Sure of Florestan's willingness, she constructed her future life with the ease of one who moves in an imaginary world and feels his desires strongly underrating in advance all that could count against their realization. She was free, so was Florestan. She now remembered how, on noting for the first time the affection this man inspired in her, she had let him know it in the night darkness of a walk, going from one hotel to the other. The gaiety inspired by the champagne had prevented her from

hiding her feeling, freeing her speech from the bonds of prudence.

"What are you doing here? The world is wide."

The two would travel through this immense world, turning the whole earth into the garden of their happiness. . . . They would leave Rina in some place, like an annoying piece of baggage, that they might follow their capricious wanderings with greater unconcern. Florestan would work or not, just as he pleased. If the necessity for action that strong men feel tormented him, they would go to California, and he would work it off in his wife's business. She was rich enough for both of them. . . . And as she went on furnishing in this way the edifice of their future life, the egoism of love let her see but one pair of beings in all the universe—herself and Florestan. The others were phantoms.

Soon she remembered a certain father who was sick. . . . Poor Balboa! She was concerned about his future; and she mentally organized his existence with the same promptness that had determined Rina's destiny. Then she saw farther off, much farther off, Don Antonio Mascaro and the women of his family. But this remote and uncertain vision she immediately wiped out with an egotistic sweep of her will. She had a right to be happy, like any other woman. Was she always going to sacrifice herself for others? . . .

All her attention was concentrated upon the only person through whom she saw existence. He had

grown so much—so much—within her, that he occupied all her mental horizon. The most enormous cities, the highest mountains, the oceans, seemed unreal compared with Florestan. As she held him next to her eyes, he filled all, eclipsing the whole universe, leaving it humble and invisible behind his back.

Dwelling upon his greatness in her eyes made her anxious to see her god again, and with the restless haste of one who fears a prank of destiny, she went up to the bedroom. Who knows what can happen to a sick man when one is away from him! . . .

Coming to the door of the room, she smiled calmly at seeing how happy the youth looked. During her absence, he had also been dreaming of their future together.

One morning, Florestan was able to leave his couch and sit in an armchair for several hours. This made Mrs. Douglas realize that they would not be buried in that house much longer. Whereupon their love-trip over the whole world would begin. While she was fixing a cushion on the back of the seat to make the young man more comfortable, he took both her hands.

He did not dare to put his desires into words, but after the duel and his wound, he felt more daring as far as actions were concerned. He despised himself for his cowardice in not being able to speak out; at the same time he enjoyed prolonging this silence, gazing at his own image in the dark convex mirror of her pupils, while he sweetly pressed her hands. . . . They remained

thus a long while. And at last he murmured, as if he were delivering a long oration charged with pleading :

“ If you would. . . . The same as when I was so sick. . . . Just on my forehead.”

She understood him, and considering questions and explanations out of place just then, she slowly advanced her lips to rest them on his forehead. Then, obeying the tug of her instinct, or letting herself drift on the courage of her own desire, her mouth lowered itself to unite with Florestan's, who reached up eagerly to meet it.

This male mouth had a chemical odour of medicines recently taken, but Concha left her lips on it, as if inhaling with delight the scent of drugs gave her the voluptuousness of sacrifice. . . . Her prudence jerked her with a violent tug out of this growing intoxication.

“ Not now. Think of his state. Let's not be mad.”

On separating, the two retained a feeling of mutual gratitude, and when other persons entered the room, this gratitude went on showing itself in long looks and words, apparently meaningless, which expressed for both the best memory of their lives.

After the midday hours were past, the invalid took the advice of the doctor, who had just paid his daily visit, and went back to bed. He must not do imprudent things. On succeeding days he could be up for a longer time. Before the end of a week he could go down to the garden, and perhaps

by the end of two weeks he would leave the house for good.

When the doctor had gone and Florestan was left in the nurse's care, Mrs. Douglas was able to sit down to a meal with Rina, in the dining-room of the house.

The two occupied one end of this table, at which at times more than twenty guests ate. Rina had never seen her friend in such a good humour as at the present moment. She laughed at everything said by Rina or the gardener's wife, who was serving them. She admired—half in kindness, half in fun—the pictures representing fruits and other edibles which adorned the room; cracked drawings on which a painter of "still life" had ingeniously fixed his gastronomic fancies.

Presently, the widow poured herself a glass of a certain light wine of Mancha that was on the table. The gardener's wife put the bottle there every day, as a traditional ornament; but heretofore it had not been opened. Concha hummed between courses, looking maliciously at Rina.

"We shall leave here soon. Our life is going to be changed. I am tired of our wandering from one side of the earth to the other like a couple of gypsies, having to defend ourselves from those who take us for what we are not. I think I am going to get married. . . . Don't blink—don't put on that hypocritical face. You know very well who it is. . . . And you will be married too. I don't know who will be the fortunate mortal to whom you will bring that luck; but you will be

married, I promise you. If necessary, I shall buy you a husband; and if the first one doesn't suit you, I shall buy you a second. . . ."

The entrance of the gardener's wife bringing a platter compelled the lady to restrain herself; heated by her own words, she felt a desire for some unusual act.

She pulled at her left hand, presently holding up between the tips of her fingers a ring with a large diamond.

"Take it; to remember me and the day by."

And she stretched out her arm, letting the jewel fall on one of the hands of the poor woman, who had just put her dish on the table.

"Jesus protect me! . . . But what am I going to do with this ma'am? . . . We are poor folks, and such fine things are not for the likes of us."

The widow insisted, with the cheerful vehemence of one who wanted to make all participate in her good fortune.

"Keep it or sell it—whichever is more agreeable to you. Thus it will always remind you of me and the Señorito Florestan."

The gardener's wife finally put the ring on one of her fingers, as far as the middle—it would go no further—and watched the many-coloured lights that darted from the stone as she turned her hand, breaking forth into a loud horse-laugh.

It was the laugh of a savage before glass beads or other shining objects of little value, offered by explorers landing on his shores. Presently, overcome by her emotions, she ran out, and her

laughs could be heard on the floor below. She had to show everybody this unheard-of gift.

The widow spent the early hours of the afternoon in a pleasant slumber. That meal had been the first easy one she had had since she came there. She was now turning over in her mind the flavour of this future she was so certain of. She saw ahead of her a level of happiness which advanced to lose itself in the infinite, without ups and downs, so lived that it would never be necessary to blast or suspend bridges across the obstacles of destiny.

Later on, Florestan was still sleeping, somewhat fatigued by the exertion he had made some hours before, while the two friends talked in the next room. Rina, who went into Madrid almost every day to make purchases or to go to the hotel for whatever baggage they needed, spoke of how much she had seen on these rapid visits.

The Amazon seemed to be interested in news that the day before she would have received indifferently. Now that she felt happy, she began to show curiosity about the world she had left behind her. She thought of Casa Botero without disgust. She even smiled a little on remembering how she had entertained him on his last visit. What would become of him? . . . She had left him stretched out in front of her door, and when Rina had come to look for her, half an hour later, there had been no one in the corridor.

"Haven't you seen your friend the Italian on any of your trips?"

Rina replied in the negative. Perhaps he had left Madrid, on not finding where Concha was stopping. At the Palace Hotel everyone thought that Mrs. Douglas was living for a while in Toledo.

The Californian felt a strong temptation to tell her companion what had happened at the door of her rooms. Her pride, the pride of an amorous woman—impelled her to this confidence. It was opportune for Rina to find out how she had treated that man who had wounded Florestan. This explained his disappearance. Undoubtedly, when he came to himself and rose from the floor, he had no more appetite to come again to visit Concha Ceballos, the millionaire's widow.

And when she began to speak, with a malignant smile which she was unable to repress, roused by the memory of this episode, the gardener's wife came in and said, mysteriously, in a low voice :

"There is a young lady downstairs who wants to have a word with you."

The widow received this news with surprise. It must be a mistake. What young lady did she know who could come to see her at Alaminos' house? How did they know she lived here? But the woman went on to explain :

"She knows you : she has given your name. It is a very young señorita, who doesn't seem to be a foreigner. I say she's from Madrid. I asked her who I was to say was calling, but she changed the subject. She says that you have seen her other times and she has something to tell you.

The poor little thing is pitiful. If you had heard how she asked me to let her in! . . . She must be in some kind of trouble."

She had come with another girl of the same age, in a taxicab that was waiting outside the yard.

"Her friend is in the car, and the only one that's come in is the one who wants to see you."

Mrs. Douglas, upset by this visit, went to one of the windows, but she saw no one on the old avenue of beeches that led from the grated door of the yard up to the house. The visitor must have been so near the building that it was impossible to see her from there.

She decided to go down to the yard. She instinctively felt that this would be preferable to letting her visitor come up to the rooms on the first floor where Florestan was.

Rina offered to speak to the visitor. Perhaps she had come to a wrong address. But the widow insisted on going. The young woman had given the widow's name and could not be looking for anybody else.

She went into the yard, looking to one side and the other without seeing anyone. Then light quick steps sounded behind her, and as she turned her eyes, she saw, rushing up between two hedges, a young woman dressed with exaggerated simplicity. The señorita was anxious, or so it seemed, to be taken for a serving maid who shows off her clothes on Sunday.

Concha immediately recognized her, with a

surprise that seemed to go beyond the limits of her imagination. She had expected anything but this visit. The daughter of Mascaro!

"Señora! . . . Señora!"

Consuelito stammered the same word over and over, as if she could not find another with which to speak her mind. She was intensely pale, her hands trembled; and suddenly she raised them to her eyes, bursting into tears.

Mrs. Douglas, stupefied by the apparition of the young girl and her inexplicable flood of tears, took her hands to draw her to herself. Consuelito made a movement of repulsion, then she let herself be won over by the widow's caressing hands.

"I can't speak," she said at last in a grievous voice. "On the way here I have been thinking so many things—so many!—to say to you, and now that I see you I don't know what has come over me—I have forgotten everything—everything!"

She kept her luminous eyes fixed for a moment on the widow, with an imploring expression, and added:

"To do such a thing to me, when I have always been fond of you! . . . Even now as soon as I see you I realize again that I cannot hate you."

Talking brought back her memory. The thoughts that had been coming into her head and accompanying her until a little while before came rushing back.

"Don't tell anybody I have come, Señora. My mother never would have done this; but I am different: I am a '*modernista*,' as she calls me, and I thought it would be better to talk to you

frankly, instead of despising and cursing you from a distance. . . . You are good, and I am confident that you will listen to me. . . ."

But darkness again seemed to fall on her mind, and she burst into fresh tears, as if repenting the decision that had brought her there.

Concha Ceballos took her tenderly to a bench, and the two sat down. She was as pale as her unexpected visitor. In her eyes was an expression of anguish and of fear. She urged the girl to speak, and at the same time she feared her words.

Consuelito was explaining with some incoherence and long pauses how she had come to desire this visit. From the first, the vague statement of her father that Florestan was travelling with Mrs. Douglas had not seemed plausible to her. Later, some envious friends, to enjoy her suffering, had been doling out the news to her as fast as they got it from the men of their families.

In Madrid news travels as rapidly as it would in a small village. Those who knew of the duel and Florestan's dangerous wound were many. Besides, "*El simpatico Alaminos*" had privately told more than two hundred persons of the installation of that rich, elegant stranger in his house to take care of the invalid. It was like a story out of a book, such as rarely can be seen in real life.

The girl had known of all this for several days. In vain, speaking apart with her father, did she have recourse to various hints in the hope of making him tell her the truth. Don Antonio firmly stuck to the story of the trip, hoping to destroy her

suspensions. Her mother, fortunately, was not so well informed as her daughter, and limited herself to murmuring against the "*modernistas*" who take single, engaged men away on trips. And the Señorita Mascaro was able to leave off pretending and sometimes to give vent to her anger or her discouragement in the company of one faithful friend who had been her comrade at school. This friend, who had gone on to the University and attacked problems with a masculine energy, put into her head the idea of going to Alaminos' house to talk to Mrs. Douglas.

"This afternoon I was desperate, so the two of us hired a taxi . . . and here I am! I admit that I hated you a lot. When I lay in my bed at night talking to you I would say awfully hard things. . . . But now that I see you I don't any more know what to say."

The two remained in silence. The widow showed no desire to speak. Mascaro's daughter made a gesture as if she had at last found the word she wanted, and said humbly :

"Señora, leave him for me!"

After this moment, it was she who had the greater serenity. She gained confidence from hearing her own words, which came more and more fully, expressing her desires with a growing ease, like that of her father.

She understood, and even did not blame, that lady for the affection she must feel for Florestan. She, Consuelito, loved him; consequently, it was perfectly natural for all women, absolutely all, to

show interest in him. But Florestan was not the man for Mrs. Douglas.

Her words revealed the sincere admiration inspired in the girl by that great lady who had come from a world of privileged ones which she perhaps would never know. All Consuelito could imagine of the splendours and refinements of life she saw realized in Concha's person. This was the only millionairess of cosmopolitan life—as her father had expressed it—whom she had been close to.

But this powerful lady must be interested in other men. Poor Florestan had only his youth; and she, the comrade of his childhood, his admirer from the time they had played together in the streets, was the one who could best accompany him in the modest and sweet existence for which the two of them had been born.

“I shall love no one else, I am sure of it. My life is so small, such a little thing, that it has room only for one man, and if you take Florestan from me, this humble life of mine will have ended . . . before it has begun. You travel over the world, Señora; you are rich; men admire you, and you surely will find so many others! . . . You don't need to take away from a poor little thing like me the only one she has! . . .”

Then, lowering her voice and her eyes, as if ashamed of her words, she began to talk stammeringly. She hesitated as if she feared to take a false step and had to make calculations before advancing her foot.

"I know very well what a difference exists between us. You are beautiful and distinguished; I am a worthless little thing, compared to you. Between the two of us, no man would hesitate, I am sure of it. I am also sure that I shall never come to be like you. . . . But Florestan is so young! . . . Besides, time passes so fast, and we never are to-morrow what we are to-day."

Mrs. Douglas it was who hastened to speak now, cutting into her visitor's new flow of words. She caressed her hands with a certain melancholy, then her face, and for some moments put the girl's little head on one of her shoulders.

"My poor little thing! . . . My poor little thing!"

Moved by this caress, Consuelito shed fresh tears.

"My poor little thing!" murmured the widow again. "Don't cry!"

Soon she pushed the girl from her, looking at her with affectionate eyes. There was no hostility for the other in this look. Her eyes reflected only the sadness of one who is unexpectedly met with an obstacle, set up by the blind and fatal powers that rudely change the course of our existence.

"Go, girl," she said in a severe voice. "You have finished saying all that you needed to say to me. . . . Now I know all that I ought to know."

Consuelito obeyed, rising to her feet. Then she stood uncertainly, looking at Concha with questioning eyes.

"Go," repeated Mrs. Douglas. "Remember

that he is upstairs. He can come to the window and see you."

This possibility, in which the widow did not believe, served to make the girl again fear that others would find out about her visit. But before going she repeated her questioning look.

"Go. You will hear from me soon. I don't know . . . perhaps to-morrow. But oh! leave me alone now!"

And without concerning herself with what Mascaro's daughter might be able to do, without looking to see if she remained in the garden or departed, Concha Ceballos remained on the bench, with her head down, buried in both hands.

Hours, treacherous and elastic in their dimensions, passed by her with the rapidity of a motion picture, as if trampling one upon the other in giddy succession. Of all that the young woman had spoken, this only remained in her memory:

"You are beautiful and distinguished. Between the two of us no man would hesitate. But time passes and . . . he is so young!"

Youth irritated her now, like those unjust privileges which give greater brilliance to the existence of some, in order to make the situation of others darker and more desperate, by the rudeness of the contrast. Why were they not both the same age, like the grains that grow and die together above the furrows? . . . Why did human beings have to live the disordered and unequal existence of the forests, where some trees raise their green young foliage next to the crowded, tottering trunks,

or among the woody giants that have known whole centuries of springtimes ? . . .

With the uncertainty of the sailor who on taking his soundings fears to find the channel too shallow, she tried to fathom the time she had lived. How old was she, and how old the man upstairs, wounded and in bed ? Perhaps the difference between the two did not exceed ten years ; perhaps twelve. . . .

It was about the same difference that had separated that Engineer Balboa from her when he had been her first love in Monterey. She was actually in the middle of the road between the father and the son. What were ten or twelve years' difference for two beings who possessed the strength and the health of a well-cultivated life ? That young woman had simply spoken the truth, without any flattery. Between the two women no man would hesitate.

The other possessed the charm of the very springtime of youth. But she herself also could be considered young. Her beauty had not the acid whiteness of the dawn ; it was splendid, like the noonday hours, soft and golden like those of mid-afternoon. Besides, money, luxury, the youthful invigoration of exercise, all that modern life has invented to prolong the graces of woman, followed her like obedient pages to hold up the train of her majestic beauty.

“ Yes ; that is very well to-day . . . but to-morrow ? ”

Following the mocking voice that repeated these words within her, Concha Ceballos was looking

valiantly over the summit of that "to-morrow," and after facing the darkness of the abyss that opened on the other side, was indignant at herself for the self-deception of the previous days, for the illusion that had made her sing and laugh a few hours before. Where had been her head? Why, she was considered by many as a woman of sure and precise thought, the equal of the men who achieve great enterprises! . . .

A difference of ten years in age need not terrify her at present. Besides, men in their youth often feel a curious attraction to feminine beauty nearer the sunset. But when ten years more had passed, he would be as young as ever, while she would try in vain to remain immovable before the horrible gateway of age, and cling to its portal, facing the dark and beckoning vacancy visible through its open doors which would finally draw her in with the snaky suction of a toothless mouth.

The efforts she would have to make to defend herself filled her with even greater fear than the thought of her decline. What a torment of despair it would be to see at all hours her husband's unchanging youth, to see in secret the slow and continuous death of her beauty! Not to be able to live calmly and carelessly; to have to watch herself every moment, to jump out of bed with the quickness of one who has to earn his bread, to perform in the dressing-room during long hours every day numberless chemical and pictorial operations before seeing the companion of her existence! . . . And such great work and effort

for a doubtful result. In spite of dressing and painting herself with care, the sad secret of her disguise would come out at last. She would surprise many ironic smiles in people, who could respect a woman when she grew old alone, but who would see in her physical misery a cause for mirth if she tried to prolong youth in order that love might not flee from her.

It terrified her to imagine that existence of lies and pretence. And then she thought of the other woman, of her who had sat at her side on that very bench, weeping, supplicating, admiring her ingenuously, but feeling at the same time the pride of her fewer years, the fugitive privilege of her virginity.

The girl was right. How could she, who had been fortunate in life, possessing finally all that makes it satisfying and enviable, carry off from that poor little thing the only illusion of her mediocre future, the sole joy of her existence? . . . By what right was she going to part the orbit of these two beings destined to move close to one another? . . . These two were just beginning their journey, seeing their path still darkened by the mystery of the uncertainties and the adventures stored in the future. She was now at the end of a triumphal career, and now let her make the most of her early triumphs.

She had kept love off when its turn came to approach. She had not sought it, nor had she turned her back when the moment came to reply to its invitation. . . . Why did she now try to go

back, to repair her neglect? She would have to push another from her place, a girl who had come into the world much later than she, and now demanded her rightful portion at the table of life, her part of the illusion and love reserved for all youth. . . .

She imagined for a moment that if she had been in Madrid when she was the age of Mascaro's daughter, she might have loved a childhood companion, poorer than she, concentrating her entire future on the hope of marrying that man, having children by him, a modest and comfortable home . . . nothing more for the rest of her existence. And presently along came a great lady, who had everything, to whom fortune had not denied a single means of satisfying her desires, and this privileged creature had the caprice to snatch away precisely her mediocre happiness. How shameful! . . .

Her energetic character revolted aggressively before such a hypothetical injustice. And she, who pretended to be just in all her actions, was going to do that very thing! . . . No; she had to suppress this dishonourable possibility, with the quickness and firmness of beings prompt to action.

Rina's voice brought her out of her meditations, and when she raised her head she thought that cloud had passed before the sun. The evening light, which, when she had closed her eyes to look within herself, had been warm and golden, had now almost the greyness of twilight. In the crystalline blue of the sky the gold of the evening had been

growing more and more pale. A purple border on a level with the horizon announced the bloody track of the flight of the sun.

Rina, after calling uselessly across the yard, finally found her half-fallen on the bench.

"Florestan wants to talk to you."

Concha's first movement was to rise to her feet to go back to the house. Then she stopped.

To enter that building, go up the stairs, see him again . . . ah, no! She knew that she would be a coward. She was sure that on returning to the convalescent's bedroom she would lose the force of that extraordinary will which made the execution of the hardest resolutions easy.

To obey his call, to speak to him again, although it was the last time, would amount to an evil deed. It would be seeking to justify herself by his weakness, to go to the meeting on a pretext that would partly explain away her conduct, as the weak or vicious do when they try to make excuses for their actions.

She asked her companion to bring her hat, coat, and gloves to where she was.

"I am cold," she murmured; and her voice was weak and sad, but only for an instant.

Then she went on with her orders in her old tone of authority. Rina would bring up what was most necessary, the strictly personal things that she could not abandon. The remainder must be left for the gardener's wife. Another keepsake!

"We are going immediately to the hotel. You are going to be responsible for packing the suit-

cases and getting together everything we have there. Then you will come to join me at San Sebastian. No; Biarritz will be better; outside of Spain! As far as possible! . . . At the hotel I shall give you a letter for Señor Mascaro. You will take it to him this very night. I am asking him to take charge of this . . . matter about his family. He will straighten it out with them."

Rina, silent, with a face which ill disguised her uneasiness, went to the house to carry out these orders. She felt her companion's temper. It was at such moments that she could hear the masculine pride exclaim :

"I don't know how to cry! . . . I have never cried!"

Mrs. Douglas called her back to give her a new order. She must go at once to the old stable of the Manor, where her automobile had been for the past few days. The American chauffeur entertained himself in his spare time talking to the gardener and his wife and the neighbours in a recently acquired Spanish, or in reading some English magazines, their pages grimy from constant handling, which he kept under the seat of the car.

"Blessed automobile," Mrs. Douglas exclaimed. "It gives us true liberty. Thanks to its invention, we can escape at all hours from the places we hate."

At that moment it seemed to her the most extraordinary and beneficial of all the discoveries that have made human life sweet and easy. It had freed people from the tyranny of space and the monotonies of time. One who could make use of

an automobile at all hours came to see and appreciate life in a different fashion from those who went always afoot. This ease of going from place to place gives the most commonplace thoughts greater expansion, breadth, and release. New horizons would open to limited understandings. . .

Then she forgot these ramblings to give Rina her last order.

"Tell the chauffeur that before midnight we are going on a trip . . . but a long trip . . . and tell him not to forget to fix the big lamps. When the sun comes up to-morrow I want it to see me far—very far!—from Madrid."

CHAPTER X

The Lie

It was growing late when she left the Casino. At high speed her automobile rushed along the road that follows the tortuous windings of the coast. In the distance the soft lemon and rose tints of the setting sun were reflected in brilliant yellows and crimsons on the snowy summits of the Alps.

Mrs. Douglas had no desire to arrive late at her hotel. Absorbed by the gambling going on in the private parlours of the Monte Carlo Casino, she had quite forgotten that at the Negresco Hotel where she was stopping, there was to be a banquet that night followed by an exhibition of the art of some of the world's most famous dancers.

As Rina had stayed at Nice to attend to some errands, Mrs. Douglas was alone in her car. And when she looked out in such fashion as to keep the chauffeur out of her range of vision, she succeeded in creating for herself the illusion that the automobile was racing along without any guidance at all, obeying her will much as an intelligent and well-trained animal might do, needing not so much as a word to direct its course.

Twice daily she passed through these marvellous scenes of the Azure Coast, now grown so familiar that she viewed them quite as though they had been an ordinary landscape. But to-day her eyes discovered in the panorama before her something inexplicably new, something mysteriously seductive. Doubtless, it was the first breath of spring announcing from afar spring's coming, those first exhalations of the year's adolescence that somehow work subtle changes in the aspect of inanimate things and in the nature of human beings.

March was at hand. The *fêtes* of Nice's famous carnival were over; and while almost all the rest of Europe was still held close in the grip of snow and sleet, this happier region had already freed itself from the gloom of wintry days; gardens, mountains, sky, and sea, enveloped in a soft luminousness, were wafting their perfume towards the newcomer, welcoming one more springtime, one more season of youth and delight.

The turquoise-tinted Mediterranean had, in the glow of the sunset, the deceptive transparence of the sea in mirage. Along its shore rose-tinted villages, white-columned villas, and clumps of trees were reflected as in the pellucid waters of a lake; the mountains, inverted, made festoons of deep blue triangles, in this limpid picture. Boats seemed to poise in the air; and under every one there was another boat, pointing its triangular sail straight towards the bottom, the two hulls bound together keel to keel like twins born of the sunset's intense and fantastic light.

"Beautiful . . . too beautiful . . ." she was thinking.

And as, inevitably, we give preference to what is far removed from us, she began to recall the Atlantic's bold waves and the tempest swells of the Pacific. Promptly, her whimsical imagination called up before her the picture of a pianola and a noisy orchestra as concrete terms of comparison illustrating the difference between the peaceable sea before her and the other seas she had known. Then she repented of this injustice to the gentle Mediterranean. After all, a temperate and tranquil beauty is a precious gift to human life—but a gift that we appreciate only when we find it again after a long eclipse.

Night was approaching as Mrs. Douglas's automobile wound its way into Nice from the harbour side, following the comparatively deserted Promenade des Anglais. Along the water-front ran an extended line of luxurious hotels with the red cupola of Hotel Negresco dominating them all at the far end. And now the traffic in the streets grew more and more compact, the crowds were better dressed and of more prosperous appearance, as the automobile advanced. Mrs. Douglas gazed absently at the cars crossing hers and hastening into the city as if fleeing from the twilight that was now spreading filmy veils of deep violet over the Baie des Anges. In the folds of this soft evening mist the first stars shone in vain.

Suddenly she gave a start, as though of surprise. Surely this was a mistake . . . the person she

thought she had recognized could not be in this part of the world! But in spite of the quickness with which she leaned forward to look again, she did not succeed in making certain. . . . Besides, the passer-by who had thus drawn her attention was walking along with eyes fixed in the opposite direction, making his way through a crowd which almost immediately hid him from view.

"But how like! . . . Anyone might have been deceived! . . ." Concha Ceballos repeated to herself mentally. Then with a shrug she threw herself back on the seat, directing her gaze towards the hotel at the end of the promenade.

Several times, already—now in one city, now in another—a surprise similar to this had overtaken her. Her imagination liked to play tricks on her, it seemed. Capricious fragments of the memories she tried to hold at a distance, or to ignore, took vengeance on her with these deceptive mirages. And then too, all men in their earlier manhood look somewhat alike, and possess a certain uniformity just as those who wear the same professional attire, soldiers or priests, have a resemblance to, and suggest one another, even though differing in feature and stature.

Awakened by this imagined encounter, memories of the life she had been living these last few months, since she had left Madrid, passed before her in almost instantaneous vision. Nearly a year, since then. A year unmarked, it seemed to her, by anything in the slightest degree unusual. Her life now could be summed up in three activities—

ceaseless moving about, hungry search for distraction, the will to forget. She had travelled restlessly through some of the European countries which had escaped her curiosity on earlier expeditions. Twice she had come to the Côte d'Azur, for the gambling. She wanted to lose herself in it, to cease thinking of the past. Of all the vices in which human beings sought diversion the most "decent," she always said, the one most proper for a woman to indulge in, if living alone and wishing to maintain her social prestige—was gambling.

She gambled for the sake of distraction, but also, because her nature easily found expression in action. And, as she was not playing to win high stakes, and as her capital was practically unlimited, chance, which turns its back on those who stand in need of it, showered favours upon her with annoying injustice. She was winning, it seemed, for the very reason that she didn't need to. Sometimes she lost. But, balancing gains and losses, this millionaire's widow found that even after indulging her taste for gambling during several weeks, her fortune had suffered no perceptible breach.

She dressed now, as always, with elegance, but the absorption and fever of the gambler had wrought changes in her appearance. Her expression was hard and preoccupied, for she was constantly devising systems for defeating Chance. Whatever her costume, she always carried a large hand-bag, almost as large as a travelling bag; in this she kept bundles of thousand-franc bills,

which sometimes returned to Nice accompanied by others like them and sometimes remained there, coming back to her a few days later. She exercised little enough caution about this hand-bag, giving it scarcely a thought. This afternoon, for instance, replete with the day's winnings, it lay sprawling on the automobile seat as though of such slight consequence as to be easily forgotten.

The most important event in the history of her emotions within these last months, had been the bestowal upon her of a Pekingese dog by a friend from New York just returned from a trip around the world. This exotic little animal was now her constant companion. Rina, of course, had a share in her affections ; but Rina was not without suffering twinges of jealousy at perceiving how much the new arrival had reduced the interest Mrs. Douglas had once felt for her. Even now, as Concha fixed her eyes on the cupola of the Negresco Hotel that was rapidly approaching, she already heard in imagination the barks with which little Fanchito would welcome his mistress. . . . What a pity it was that she had to leave him behind every afternoon when she went to the Casino ! . . .

Three times, by accident, she had met Arbuckle after leaving Madrid for Seville. As always, he would bob up in the various hotels she stopped at, and then, when Concha was beginning to grow weary of his constant presence, he would devise some expedition or other for himself, that would keep him away for several months. He must be in Egypt now, she believed, for since the newspapers

had begun making a great to-do about the recently discovered tomb of some one of the Pharaohs, he had thought himself under some obligation as an American whose duty it is to see and know everything, to be present at these excavations. But Mrs. Douglas had a presentiment that at any moment her discreet suitor might once more put in an appearance.

And then there had been that disagreeable meeting with Casa Botero in Paris! With what a passion of hatred he had looked at her that first moment, as though capable of passing beyond all the limits of social proprieties! Then, checking his first angry impulses, he had forced a smile, and had bowed, as though he would speak with her. But she had pursued her way with menacing haughtiness. A woman who has been forced to deal with a man by means of her fists is not afterwards going to offer him her hand, just like a boxer at the end of a match!

This man, she thought, must undoubtedly be speaking ill of her everywhere. Later, it occurred to her that he might perhaps keep silent out of shame for the memory of that scene in the hotel at Madrid. But whatever Casa Botero did or did not do was to her of not the slightest consequence. No matter how often she met him at the theatre or social functions of one kind or another, she always pretended not to recognize him. Quite recently—only a few days ago in fact—she had seen him at a gaming table some distance away from her own at the Casino. With him, she noted,

was a woman, rather showily dressed, her ripe years not too successfully disguised by pomades, rouge, and other such accessories. Some millionairess, no doubt, on whom he contemplated bestowing the dubious title of Marquesa de Casa Botero. Mrs. Douglas passed close to the couple, without looking up, pleased, nevertheless, with the encounter. One more obstacle removed from the tranquillity of her future! She asked nothing more of that future now than that it be gently monotonous, free of the conflicts and extremes of feelings so pleasurable to passionate natures.

And the other man? . . . She didn't want to think about him. He no longer interested her. She could even have sworn to herself that in all the months elapsed since her flight from Madrid, she had not thought of him more than a dozen times: A woman who has a will of her own ought to be able to control her emotions and passions. . . .

No. She didn't think of him often; but at the same time she felt convinced that he was always present in her memory, his image tucked away in some fold of her brain, just like actors waiting in the wings; though the audience cannot see them it knows they are there for it caught a glimpse of them hiding behind some curtain or bit of scenery; and it knows that at some moment these hidden actors may suddenly step out to the centre of the stage.

Now and again, though, her memory rebelled against the tyranny of her will, and took an unwholesome delight in startling her, making her

think she actually saw Florestan in the Bois de Boulogne or the Champs Elysées, or again in the Pincio at Rome, or the Plaza de la Señoria in Venice, or skiing in the snows of Saint Moritz. But when, profoundly shaken by these encounters, she looked again at the man she thought to have recognized, invariably she discovered him to be a stranger, whose only resemblance to Florestan lay in his youth and the alertness of bearing common to a young generation addicted to sports.

As the commotion within her subsided, the same protest would arise again and again to her lips :

“ And supposing it were Florestan, what then ? . . . The Madrid madness is over and done with . . . no more to be thought of. . . . ”

But even while enjoying her tranquillity she would feel a curious disappointment as though she would have preferred on occasion *not* to have been mistaken, as though somehow this permanent absence were strangely inexplicable.

“ What can have happened to the poor boy ? ” she would wonder at times.

Only once, since her flight from Madrid, had she received any news of those friends of a few weeks' standing, on whom she had turned her back forever. Melancholy news too, reaching her only after a circuitous journey.

Rina in Paris had received a letter from her associate in the Mexican mining enterprise—the letter came from Mexico—announcing that Don Ricardo Balboa had died very suddenly in Madrid of a heart affection ; and by way of making the news

more authentic, Rina's correspondent had enclosed a clipping from the obituary notice of a Mexican newspaper. As Concha Ceballos read Florestan's name at the end of the announcement, signed of course by the members of the family, she felt a commotion comparable only to that of receiving a staggering blow on the chest.

"But what can it matter to me? What have I to do with the things that concern this boy's life?" she asked herself, trying to quiet her agitation. "I feel his father's death very keenly, but it will serve to separate us more completely than ever. Of course he'll marry the Señorita Mascaro now . . . he may even be married already."

The calm energy that she most often displayed in making decisions affecting the management of her fortune succeeded finally in restoring a cheerless peace to her feelings. For a woman who wishes to win the respect of society must impose as rigid a discipline on her memories as on her outward acts. But, alas! every now and then her imagination would prepare some deceptive surprise for her—as now, for instance, on the Promenade des Anglais.

"Just a resemblance . . . that's all. Anyway, the past is the past. Why revive it even in fancy?"

As she had expected, she was greeted at the door of her luxurious suite at the Negresco by her lap-dog. His trailing honey-gold hair and flat snout, black as though newly varnished, made him look like some strangely animated idol. But on

closer acquaintance he seemed much more to resemble a muff—a muff that served as a container for a barking mechanism that, unfortunately, never got out of order.

The grotesque little snout imprinted a cold kiss on his mistress's cheek as she held him up, exclaiming with delight over the small creature's beauty. Truly the best friend she had ever had!

The young Frenchwoman who had accompanied Concha from New York was waiting for her to choose, from among a number of gowns spread out on a divan, the one she proposed to wear at the banquet. Rina, it seemed, was downstairs in the manager's office getting Mrs. Douglas's jewel case from the hotel safe, to which she also prudently entrusted the small fortune in cash that she carried about with her, and that she preferred not to keep in her bedroom.

Mrs. Douglas usually wore a necklace of famous pearls on occasions like the present, but for the banquet which she was to attend that evening she chose to wear instead some diamonds that she reserved for quite extraordinary festivities.

With a cautious and respectful air Rina came in carrying the jewel case under her arm. But in spite of the veneration she displayed for the treasures in her keeping, she seemed to forget all about them at sight of Mrs. Douglas, and set the box down on a table so as to talk more at ease.

"Who do you think I ran into about an

hour ago? I was so surprised! You'd never guess!"

And she smiled as though enjoying in advance the curiosity and questioning she expected to arouse. But Concha remained impassive, for from the first word her friend had uttered she had divined. . . .

"I know," she said coldly. "I saw him too, from the automobile . . . Florestan Balboa."

Rina, somewhat disappointed by this accurate guess, went on with her chatter, displaying considerable interest in the meeting.

During these last few months her life had been so "monotonous"—as she put it—with no one at hand either to love or be loved by . . . just as though that kind of love indeed had fled from the earth forever! Florestan Balboa's presence exercised on Rina much the same attraction that a fresh copy of a novel might have for the reader forced by circumstances to lay down the copy he had been reading a few months before. . . . And besides, Florestan was a young man.

"He's better looking than ever. . . . Better set-up, more mature—and there's a sadness about him that's very becoming. In deep mourning, of course, on account of his father's death. . . . It's some six months now since poor Don Ricardo died. We talked a bit about the mine. Things seem to be going better in Mexico, and perhaps I shall soon be rich. But I didn't bother him much about that because he seemed to have other things on his mind. He's just come from Paris. Someone there told him where we were. He arrived this morning

and is stopping at some other hotel. . . . He dropped in here at tea-time, hoping to find you. Really, all Nice seems bent on getting into the 'hall' downstairs at that hour—for the dancing! . . . I told him you went to Monte Carlo every afternoon, and that the best time to find you is at noon, when you usually take a stroll on the Promenade."

"Is he married yet?" Mrs. Douglas asked with indifference, as she examined the contents of the jewel case, waves of flaming colour flashing from the marvellous gems at every movement of her hand.

"We talked about that too. No, he isn't married yet, but somehow I got the impression that he is going to marry the Mascaro girl, the one we saw in Madrid with that old shrew of a mother. . . . He doesn't seem to be very keen about the match. Poor fellow! The girl is pretty enough, and agreeable enough too, but a young man like him deserves something better. He was born for higher destinies!"

She smiled at her friend—an ambiguous smile that left some doubt as to whether these higher destinies were to be embodied in the person of Mrs. Douglas or in her own. . . .

Concha was toying with the viands and wines of the long-heralded banquet with an indifference that might have been accorded to the plainest fare. To the professional dancers and resplendent show girls exhibiting their beauties and talents in the open space reserved in the centre of the hall, she

gave an attention at times wholly feigned. And the flattery her escort was murmuring in her ear left her equally cold.

"The women over there at that table are having a spasm over your necklace! They never saw its like—can you hear them?"

Could such inanities possibly mean anything to her? . . . What she talked about to several compatriots of hers present at the dinner she could not a few minutes afterward have recalled. For while outwardly her life functioned automatically, and she ate without knowing what she ate, and mechanically spoke words of the meaning of which she took no account, her will kept repeating to her, like a steam engine whistling at regular intervals, but with ever-increasing intensity, as the pressure increased:

"He is here. . . . It must all be put an end to for good and all. . . . I must keep him from coming back."

And it even seemed to her that Florestan was in the banquet hall. She felt his invisible presence, and had the strange impression that his eyes were following her. . . . Perhaps he was looking at her from the courtyard . . . or perhaps from the other side of the shutters, hidden among the crowd of curious onlookers, who were following the progress of the feast from afar. And the bare suspicion that this presence might be real made her shudder as before some one of life's overwhelming perils. . . . perils that even as they menace us, give us the voluptuous anguish of the unknown.

Arbuckle's pursuit she could endure quite coldly. He followed her everywhere, but he always hastened to take himself off like a bashful child, whenever he noticed the slightest signs of annoyance on her part. Nor did he lose any ground by this manœuvre. She even found him amusing at times. But this other man was not Arbuckle, and it frightened her to feel so weak, so utterly disarmed in the presence of this boy who, as fate would have it, was unaware of his great power. . . . Yes, but if these encounters became frequent the very thing she wanted to avoid would inevitably occur. The hardest, the most painful part of her task had been accomplished in Madrid. Could she allow the moral torture she had then inflicted upon herself to become a barren sacrifice? Could she turn back now and go down the steep and terrible path up which she had climbed to her present solitude? . . . No, she must go on.

The greater part of the night she lay sleepless, thinking of what would take place the next day when she met Florestan.

"You must end it all," her will repeated. "This must be the last time you ever see him!"

Suddenly a new Concha Ceballos awoke within her, a Concha whose existence she had never even suspected, a Concha whose words were marked by an oddly aggressive cynicism. As she listened to the counsellings of this other self, unknown until that moment, she was overcome with shame.

"This is the influence of the Côte d'Azur!" So at least she tried to explain the conduct of this

hitherto unrevealed part of her soul. "The life all of the senses these people around me are leading, the free manners of those who flock to this lovely garden spot . . . all this has had an effect that I hadn't noticed until now!"

But, heedless of her excuses, the other self went on, imperiously:—

"You have him in your power. . . . Now that he has come to find you without your having called him, why not make the most of your good fortune? Fate has done this . . . fate must approve of what it brings about. Act as other women would act in your place. You have suffered enough. Satisfy your passion, in secret. No one need know. . . . Take it as an adventure . . . a few days of pleasure . . . and then you can leave him. So many other women have done the same in like case!"

But the other Concha, the one she knew, the one who was her very self, the one who governed her life with reason, protested against these counsellings, called them absurd. If she ran away again, Florestan would follow her once more as he was doing now. When a man loves, such an experience as the one proposed does not satisfy his love! On the contrary, it serves but to excite his desires. He would follow her afterwards to the ends of the world, invoking, as authority so to do, the rights she herself would have given him; and she, then, after having yielded to him, how could she defend herself? . . . For a moment yes, she would be tasting supreme sweetness . . . but afterwards?

Would she have the strength of will to harden her heart sufficiently to leave him after this mutual possession, as that demoniacal creature so startlingly manifest in her very soul whispered to her she might do? . . . No; after a brief surrender followed by flight, things would be worse even than before—and for both of them.

Suddenly came, like those decisive re-enforcements which determine the result of a battle, the image of a girl's tear-stained cheek . . . Florestan's fiancée. She was far away too . . . could not defend herself. . . . Besides, Concha had made the girl a promise. How infamous, to take advantage of her absence! . . .

"You must put an end to this. You must not see him again; you must prevent his coming back."

But, Amazon-hearted that she was, her severity melted within her even as she made her decision; and to herself she cried out as if in lamentation:

"Now that I've grown accustomed to living without his image . . . seeing him again will only revive what it cost me so much to kill! . . . But I must. . . . I must! . . ."

It was a little after eleven the next morning when she went to the Promenade des Anglais. At this hour the crowds sunning themselves on the beaches are at their densest, but the boom of the noonday cannon dissolves the clustering groups, sending them scurrying in all directions toward their hotels and houses in search of luncheon.

Rina accompanied her, and the Pekingese, kept on a leash so short that he was fairly suspended

above the ground, dangling in momentary peril of his life against Rina's skirts. Instead of walking down the Promenade toward its starting-place where winter visitors are to be found sitting on benches and chairs, listening to the music dispensed by restaurants and cafés, Concha and her companions took the opposite direction, going toward the suburb called California. As they pursued their way, the passers-by became less frequent, and the walk along the shore began to assume the appearance of the real seaside. There was no sand here and the fishermen's boats lay high and dry on round boulders that looked much like hard-baked dough cakes streaked blue and grey. The sunshine, clear white from sheer intensity, streamed out over the sea like a driving rain of silver.

Mrs. Douglas drew down her upper lip with the aggressive and stern movement that habitually accompanied her momentous decisions. The matter must be ended, and as soon as possible. . . .

On the shore a cluster of curious onlookers were gazing in wonder at two enormous and lifeless creatures of the sea that lay sprawling at their feet, strange saw-toothed monsters, their huge dusky backs spotted with white, their dead eyes still oddly ferocious. An old sailor, bearded and hairy, his gentle glance curiously reminiscent—like that of many old men of the Nice wharf-side—of his compatriot, the great Garibaldi, was relating to the group of curiosity-seekers how these two Mediterranean sharks had been captured. The pair—the old mariner was quite sure the monsters

were respectively male and female, although he did not know just how the sex of the creatures was to be discerned—had, it seemed, destroyed a great part of the old fellow's nets.

"And then"—he pursued his narrative in soft Italian sing-song—"the male shark, seeing his mate caught in the net, plunged in himself. 'Get her out or die along with her,' he seemed to be saying, as clear as day. . . . I saw it with my very own eyes, just as I'm telling you, Signori!"

Concha Ceballos stood listening to the old mariner's tale from the Promenade above the shore. In spite of being quite convinced that his romantic notions with respect to the two dead sharks were false, she felt a stir of emotion at the old fellow's words. How artlessly he attributed even to these egotistical and ferocious monsters of the deep the same passions that delight or sadden human beings! Ah, poet of the red shirt, rhapsodist of the "middle sea"! In the obscure depths of those waters wherein all life is a ceaseless devouring or a being devoured—waters that the setting sun in a daily renewed symbol stains with the sinister hue of blood—even here he traced the wonders of love. . . .

In one of the cheap restaurants on the other side of the Promenade a wedding party was celebrating the wedding feast, the bride and groom noisily acclaimed by well-wishers from among the inhabitants of the quarter.

With twangings of guitars and mandolins, the

musicians, arrayed like Neapolitan fishermen, were accompanying a tenor who was singing a popular song. His throaty, mellow voice, one of those voices that in the narrow limits of a room make the listener smile pityingly, but that, heard by night on a canal in Venice or in the golden mist that floats between the red-stained promontories of the Gulf of Naples, brings a moisture to the eyes, rose and throbbed on the notes of—

Vieni al mare

Vieni al ma-a-a-re. . .

Thus moaned the voice to an accompaniment of sweet vibrating strings; and Mrs. Douglas felt a softening within her, as though the singer's invitation had been addressed to her.

The sea, yes . . . the sea, that was freedom and forgetting, a new existence purified and cleansed by all the wide spaces of the far horizon . . . an azure solitude . . . endless dawns on a lonely ocean, unseen by human eye, the pearly tints of their diaphanous mists revealing themselves for the sole glory and delight of the new day . . . royal sunsets of purple and gold, the sign and promise of splendid morrows; sunsets that, like the vast spaces of ocean itself, bore on their brows the sadness of eternity.

"*Vieni al mare . . .*" She would accept the invitation to long journeyings, and to forgetfulness. . . . In her mind's eye she considered which of all the seaports visited in her previous existence should be her haven of refuge and of peace. One

by one they rose before her, forests of masts, cordage and sails drying in the sun, old wharves of green mottled stone, and great rusting iron rings such as those from which a transatlantic liner slowly removes its steel flank, extending the first yard measure of distance to many thousands of leagues as it pursues its course in the great spaces of ocean. Ports under blazing suns and smelling of warm fermenting bananas and pungent fruits, of spices and precious woods . . . ports where under grey skies an aroma of tea and gin and tobacco mingles with the acrid sweetness of opium . . . and on the wharves of every one of these cities of the seafarer, a motley multitude, a babel of tongues, grotesque minglings of civilization and barbarism—gigantic iron cranes and buffalo carts, with their solid wooden wheels, and men of all races, yellow, black, copper-hued, and the pale races of the west.

Travel. . . . Forget! . . . Suddenly, Concha remembered an old Latin professor of Los Angeles who had once sought to excuse the strange absence of curiosity which had kept him all his life in the same retired corner of the globe by quoting from Horace—

Care, the black-hearted, mounts the same horse as the rider,
And however far we journey, never leaves our side. . . .

Yes. It is true. Even though we should leap on board the boat that is to carry us away, the shadow we seek to escape, more agile than we, climbs aboard first. Inescapable companion, per-

sistent ghost, too shrewd ever to be misled, following us the more closely the more we endeavour to throw it off the track and free ourselves from the unwelcome presence by some astute trick.

Yet, even on this shadow dogging our steps, time and distance at last exercise their power. If they do not free us from its presence, they at least weaken its hold. Mrs. Douglas reached a point in her meditations where she compared "care, the black-hearted" travelling with us whithersoever we may turn, to those wines of the Old World that undergo a subtle change when they take a sea voyage, growing even more mellow in flavour and more fragrant in perfume.

Suddenly she felt a growing wonder at finding herself still alone on the Promenade save for the faithful Rina. The few seconds that had passed, so crowded with depressing reflections, seemed as long as so many melancholy hours. She looked about her, now in one direction, now in another, but without discovering any sign of the person she was expecting. He must be hiding somewhere watching her from afar. . . . Yes, she could feel in the air around her the presence of that same being whose image haunted her memory. Would he perhaps, out of youthful perversity, fail to come, in the hope perhaps that the painful waiting inflicted would weaken her will? . . .

Behind her she heard a voice that, in spite of the fact that she had been expecting to hear it since she had left the hotel, made her start violently.

“Señora Douglas . . . Doña Concha. . . .”

With this ceremonious greeting he announced his presence. And then she saw him looming up before her, taller, and a little heavier than when she had known him in his father's office.

Fair, slender of limb, serene and strong, the young Saint George must have looked very like him, or the hero Esplandian; but now there was something melancholy in his glance, a veil of sadness over his features, an air of discouragement about his whole person. The hero, yes, but weary, still convalescing from the wounds with which he had come out of his mighty conflict with the dragon.

A physical sensation of pain so sharp as to cause Mrs. Douglas to wonder if some stray pin were not traitorously jabbing its way into her flesh, almost made her lay her hand on the injured spot. Nothing but a stern order from her will checked the movement.

The Pekingese meanwhile, scandalized by the extreme presumption with which this stranger was approaching his mistress, or instinctively aware, perhaps, of the presence of a rival for her affections, broke into a furious and grotesque frenzy of barking, making desperate attempts at the same time to bite the intruder's legs.

“Take that hateful beast away!” Mrs. Douglas commanded angrily. At that moment her cherished pet seemed to her supremely detestable. She could not understand how she had ever been able to fondle it and call it sweet names.

Rina was well aware of the duties that the perfect companion and confidante must discharge as soon as she observes that love still exists in the world, and that, with every manifestation of good intent, it is drawing near some particular individual. So she picked up the Pekingese and began talking to it, calling Fanchito's attention to the pretty sea and the lovely sailboats gliding so smoothly along, over there where the water ran into the sky. . . . Walking away some twenty yards or more, Rina judged that the two persons behind her should now feel that they could carry on their conversation in all freedom, without having to pay the slightest attention to her.

But fearing, apparently, that Rina might come back, Florestan precipitately began to speak as though his opportunity of carrying on a conversation alone with Mrs. Douglas might at any moment be taken from him. He wanted, one might have supposed, to say in a breath all that was in his thought, all that he had pondered during long hours of reflection. With a haste born of timidity, he poured out his words in a stream intended to carry away in its flood all the objections that might be opposed to it. Everything! . . . He must say everything! Everything that needed to be said! . . . And the words already spoken seemed to serve as mounds from which to take another jump, and another, with ever-renewing impetus.

To begin with—his presence in Nice must be justified, it seemed. Explanations, pretexts, truth, and falsehood, in astonishing juxtaposition. . . .

He had gone to Paris to attend to certain matters left unfinished by his father, enterprises planned but never carried out, inventions tested but never put on the market—all manner of things. And there he had met Harold Arbuckle, just returned from Egypt. It was from Arbuckle that he learned where Mrs. Douglas was to be found. . . .

Did he note a doubting or incredulous glance in the eyes of the woman before whom he was thus pouring out excuses? Or did he perhaps feel a quite spontaneous impulse to return to the shorter and wider pathway of truth?

"But what's the good of lying?"—he broke out suddenly. "I went to Paris simply and solely to find you, and I had to make innumerable inquiries, until, by sheer luck I met the friend I mentioned, who told me where you were. I had to see you. Those days in Madrid were so dreadful. . . . I didn't know how to explain what had happened. . . . I couldn't go in search of you . . . because I couldn't leave my father. Letters . . . how many letters I wrote you, sending them to every one of the places you had mentioned in those long talks we had in Spain, talks I remember word for word. . . . I almost sent a letter to you at your ranch—the one you talked to me about so many times—'Laguna Brava,' out in California. If none of these letters have overtaken you yet, they will some day. But even while I was sending them off to the other side of the world, I had the painful certainty that you were closer at hand than that . . . closer at hand but no easier to find. Where

was I to find you? . . . How was I to know where to look? . . ."

He grew silent, saddened by the memory of that period of enforced passivity in his father's house, when he had been able to follow her only by the desperate cries sent after her across a hemisphere of ocean.

"And father's death," he went on. "You can imagine what it meant. . . . It's natural enough for a son to feel that blow above almost any other . . . but at the same time I kept thinking to myself: 'Now you are free; now you have money . . . the world lies open. . . . You can go where you will. You can go find *her*, and perhaps you can make her tell you why she left you in so strange a fashion, and why she put this abrupt end to the happiest period in your life!'"

And now it seemed he had reached the point most important to him. His tone changed as reproachfully, almost tearfully, he asked:

"Why did you run away from me when I was scarcely out of danger? . . . What could I possibly have done to offend you as much as that?"

In his endless meditations Florestan had come to the conclusion that he must unconsciously have given Concha some reason for believing herself justified in leaving him. What it was he could not divine. But now with humbly imploring eyes he stood before her, begging her forgiveness of a misdeed as yet unknown to him, but never doubting, whatever it was, that he must have committed it.

Moved by such boyish candour, Concha Ceballos let her eyes dwell on his a moment.

"Offend her!" . . . But at once she repented of her emotion. A dangerous softening was already noticeable in the firm texture of her will. No; she must neither prolong nor repeat such interviews. It was nothing more or less than conscious surrender. She must, on the contrary, raise an obstacle between them, an immense obstacle mounting to the sky, so lofty and precipitous that it would admit of no pathway along its sides, something like those jagged mountain ranges on which for centuries communities of human beings live on one side or the other, in as complete ignorance of the villages on the opposite flank of the mountain as if the inhabitants of those villages had never been born.

And she had the means of creating such an obstacle. She had thought the whole thing out the night before in those indefinable moments that follow long hours of wakefulness when that terrible monster insomnia, weary of gnawing at our bones, opens wide his jaws and lets us fall, broken and lifeless, our thoughts so confused that we do not know for the moment whether we are still in the world of reality or whether we have crossed over into the dominion of dreams. In this state our minds, functioning spasmodically, at times conceive ideas of extraordinary originality, and at times beget the most grotesque incoherencies.

Perhaps the obstacle was not really her own creation, inspired by danger; it might well enough

be due to the memory of something read long ago and forgotten—as are so many of the acts we believe to be original. At first, she had resisted the suggestion her mind offered her . . . no, it was too strange, too paradoxical! . . . But . . . is then everything in our lives so flat, mediocre, monotonous? Even in the most commonplace of lives there may be a year, a day, an hour in which we live with the dramatic intensity, the absorbing emotion, or the magnificent grief that we have known up to that time only in the imaginary personages of the theatre or of books.

A mountain must be raised there between them. . . . And if this should prove not enough, if he, with his young ardour attempted to hew a path out of the solid rock that he might seek her out in her refuge, why then . . . then he must find her in the arms of another, protected by a husband capable of defending her by his very presence from that cowardice in her own heart that would betray her to temptation.

But the first thing to be done was to persuade him to leave her, and prevail upon him to follow his own orbit in life; and for this she must suppress the attracting force that had drawn him out of the natural course traced for him by destiny. Then, she would marry. This is what she had determined upon that very night. For this is a way of taking shelter from the dramatic surprises life may prepare for us when we have failed to pay to youth that which is youth's natural due, and seek to wipe out this debt when the time is already

past. . . . And besides, a husband would guard her also against all the Casa Boteros roaming about through the great cities of the world, seeking to transform marriage into the means of support. She would marry Arbuckle, she thought. With him, at least, she could have a friendly and tranquil companionship, and quietly live out the rest of her existence in a state of honourable peace. She needed a husband to direct and guide her through life . . . and who could be better than this compatriot of hers ?

Suddenly, she heard her own voice inquiring in a tone of ironic reproach :

“ And you aren’t married yet to that Professor’s daughter, the girl I met in Madrid ? ”

Florestan met the question with a gesture almost of joy. This, he thought, was the key to the mystery—that inexplicable flight. Jealousy . . . it was jealousy that had driven Concha away. . . . With all the vehemence of one whose words are dictated by truth, he replied :

Why, Mascaro’s daughter and he had been children together. They had for one another that special kind of tenderness that springs from a lifelong affection. But not love . . . no . . . although he had believed that it was love before he had known another woman. . . .

“ But now I am convinced that I can love only you, Concha. . . . My father died believing that I was going to marry the girl. Her parents believe it too, take it quite as a matter of course, and even expect the wedding to take place as soon as I come

back from this trip of mine, which they think has something to do with the settlement of Father's affairs. . . . But you, you know the truth. And I am here now for the sole purpose of telling you that the only true life I can conceive of for myself is a life with you. The girl is for me a friend, a good comrade, and, if you like . . ."

But a gesture from Concha demanded silence. She was very pale, her eyes hard. And her mouth was drawn into the stern harsh lines habitual to it in difficult moments.

"Don't say any more," she commanded him, and there was no trace of weakness in her tone. "What you are saying is monstrous. I would have chosen to keep silent, but now you have made that impossible. No, not a word more. Because you will only be ashamed of it later."

And there was in her voice so genuine a note of protest, of startled disapproval, that the boy stood hesitant and confused, as though he had said something unheard of, some enormity of whose bearing he was in total ignorance. And seeing the question in his eyes, Concha went on :

"I left Madrid because I had to. You attracted me, yes, but my feeling toward you was quite undefined, and I wanted it to remain so. The moment came when I realized that you misunderstood this feeling of mine, and I grew frightened . . . more than that . . . I felt all the terror one must feel at the approach of something unnatural, monstrous. . . . Call to mind all that happened on the very day I left you . . . at nightfall. I

had kissed you before, I confess it . . . several times, when you were delirious. That day we kissed again, conscious of what we were doing, both of us. But no sooner had I felt your lips touch mine than I had a revelation of the terrible thing that had sprung up there between us, and I saw distinctly the peril menacing us . . . a peril the mere thought of which must fill one with shame and horror. . . . You, my poor boy, you were not to blame. How could you be? . . . For you didn't know, and it was not so strange that you should make a mistake. . . . But *I*, I knew . . . and that is why I ran away, that is why I felt I must at all cost avoid you. For you interpret as love, love as it is commonly understood—the natural attraction a man feels toward a woman—something which is . . .”

She remained silent, hesitating, as though not daring to put her revelation into words.

For a few moments Florestan stood waiting with manifest interest in this mystery that Concha was struggling so to reveal. Then his curiosity languished seemingly. Like all those who are obsessed by an idea, he returned to what seemed to him the most important matter touched upon in that strange discussion.

“Don't think that I have pursued you without giving serious thought to the future. I have thought of everything! The past can be broken with. I can cut it off clean, if you like. I shall never go back to Spain. The promises I made because I didn't know what I was doing, because

I knew too little about life . . . all that I can forget. Only take me with you, wherever you go . . . and for always. . . .”

His voice was trembling now with awakening ardour, and there was not a trace of the timidity that had held him in check during the earlier part of the interview. Concha divined that he was on the point of breaking out into impassioned pleadings, fervid promises, and anxious questionings. With deliberate coldness she interrupted him.

“Do you remember your mother, Florestan ?”

Disconcerted by the seeming irrelevance of the question, he stopped short in the middle of his passionate declaration. Why in the world should she choose this moment to call up the remote and shadowy image of his mother, pale ghost that she was, scarcely perceptible in his memories of his childhood ?

Eyes lowered, and a deep line between her brows, Mrs. Douglas went on, ashamed of her own words, seemingly, murmuring them in a colourless, monotonous voice, as one might recite a Pater-noster.

He had told her, she reminded him, in those long conversations they had had in Madrid, that he had never seen his mother. He had not even, like most motherless children, had the affection of some old nurse. No one had ever talked to him of the woman who had given him birth, no garrulous, kind old servant had by her gossip created for him an image of the vanished woman ; no one had helped him to create from the memories of his

first stirrings of consciousness a picture of her who had given him life. . . .

Bewildered, confused by what she was saying, Florestan vaguely made a few motions of assent.

"Yes. All I had was an old photograph, so faint, so blurred that I had to imagine the features I could not see. . . . And just because I never knew my mother, I loved my father all the more . . . far more than most sons do, I verily believe. . . . But why are you bringing up all this now?"

And at last she brought herself to reveal the obstacle. Like the magicians of old, she would cause a mountain to spring from the ground there before them by the sheer power of words, by the magic formula her will had found.

"I am bringing this up now," she pronounced sombrely, "because this is my reply to your question, and the justification for my flight which must otherwise remain forever incomprehensible to you. Hasn't it ever occurred to you that you might have been born in circumstances quite different from those your father so briefly described to you? . . . Has it never crossed your mind that there might be more than one mysterious love episode in the earlier history of that Engineer Balboa who travelled so widely through the Americas, and might so easily have known many women, and who was besides such a charming and interesting figure?"

Florestan stood staring at her, eyes wide with

amazement and doubt. No, he didn't understand. What was it she was trying to say?

And to help him to make the final leap from bewilderment to comprehension, she went on:

"That is why I left you when I saw that you were misinterpreting the affection I showed you. For I am the only woman in the world who cannot love you as other women can. . . . Merely to suppose anything else is too horrible. . . ."

But Florestan interrupted her with a hesitating smile, as though about to give utterance to something quite absurd; and yet there was an anxious note in his voice as he asked:

"Now you're not going to try to make me believe that you are my mother. . . ."

She raised her eyes and looked fixedly at him; then, coldly, slowly, letting each word fall like a great weight:

"And why could I not be just that?"

A long, long silence. The boy strove to repeat his smile, but it faded from his lips no sooner had it touched them. For the grave, anguished bearing of the woman facing him crushed his incredulity. Mechanically, he took off his hat in spite of the burning rays of the sun, and scratched the side of his head as though by so doing he could set in order the turbulent, fevered thoughts rioting inside his skull.

The musicians of the wedding party were by now twanging out the accompaniment to another sailor's ditty, vociferously rising in the air from the tenor's lusty throat. Groups of promenaders

were crossing from the asphalted sea-walk to the pavement in front of the restaurant, crowding about the railing. But neither Concha nor Florestan heard a single word of the Neapolitan serenade that was being poured out into the full noontide, attracting an audience from one end to another of the Promenade des Anglais.

"Why . . . this is absurd!" he suddenly broke out with sharp irritation. "You are not old enough . . . you couldn't possibly be . . . what you try to make me believe."

She looked at him pityingly, protectingly.

"How can you tell? . . . You don't know how old I am. The women of to-day have no age. We are eternally young until, some fine morning we wake up and find that youth is gone . . . forever. Yes, I am old, much older than you think."

He was nervously rubbing his breast now as though this exasperated movement helped him to formulate fresh doubts. . . .

"But you and my father were never friends. . . . Why, it was even quite the opposite! I happen to know that some letters you wrote him caused him the greatest annoyance."

"Exactly . . . and because of the past!" she replied. "This very lack of friendliness between your father and me is proof of the quite different relations that once existed between us. Perhaps he could never really reconcile himself to my marrying someone else after that experience of ours there in California. Or it might well be that I hated him because he would not marry me."

"But I have proof that all this is false . . . papers, documents, and in my own home," he broke out. "My certificate of baptism gives my mother's name. . . . I was born in Mexico . . . very near the United States frontier, it is true . . . but in Mexico, nevertheless. And that is one place where, I believe, you have never been."

She forced herself to smile ironically.

"In that land of revolutions, and in a distant province, too, where there is a constant change of administration, it is never very difficult to manufacture whatever documents may be necessary. . . . Your father was a gentleman, and he tried to clear my past of all suspicion."

"Swear to me that this is true!" cried Florestan hoarsely.

"But why? . . . What better proof could you have than the one before your eyes? Do you think a respectable woman of a recognized position in society could bring herself to make any such painful confession as this if she had the slightest doubt? . . . To reveal a secret such as this . . . don't you see what it must cost me?"

He seemed overwhelmed. But she sensed that the doubts she had aroused were already dispersing, and to turn them into conviction, she went on:

"When a woman finally brings herself to speak of any such matter as this, you must believe her. I cannot tell you how painful it is to bring out the facts darkening our mutual past into the light so that you can see them. . . . But don't you under-

stand now how it was that I chose to run away from you in Madrid rather than tell you these cruel things? Never, never would I have chosen to speak of them, if I had had my way. But now you must know the truth. And you must not misinterpret the caresses I gave you when you lay there before me in peril of death. What had to be done is done. You know now what we must be for one another. We shall part and go our ways and both of us guard the secret that until a moment ago was mine alone."

In the distance, from the ancient castle of Nice high up on its hill, boomed the noonday cannon. But even this detonation did not catch the ear of these two beings, so absorbed were they in their whirling thoughts. Then with the abrupt flare of energy of one suddenly aware of a danger close at hand, he broke away from the maze of doubts and fears in which he had stood motionless and as though paralyzed.

"But I don't want to be separated from you! . . . I want to live close to you. . . . I want to follow you wherever you go . . . either as what I once thought I could be to you, or as what you tell me to-day I am. . . ."

Such was the young man's assurance and strength as he spoke that Concha's face softened. The icy mask through which she had spoken was transformed again to living flesh.

"In spite of what I have just told you? . . . Do you want to live near me always in spite of all this? . . ."

"Always. . . . Perhaps I do not desire you as once I did. That would be monstrous. But I must see you, I must be with you always, I must speak to you, go with you wherever you will. I do not dare tell you I love you as a . . . as what you say you are. But I shall love you always, always! And I cannot live without you!"

She had to make a great effort to conceal from his eyes the commotion that "always," ringing with such determination and energy, aroused in her. Happiness and love were for one last moment within her grasp. She had but to say a word, to break into a laugh, to pretend that it was all a joke, a stratagem to test his love. . . . But then before her came the image of a garden bench . . . and she herself was sitting on the bench, pressing close to her breast the head of one who moaned and pleaded with her to give her back her lover. . . . "Remember what you promised!" a voice cried imperiously within her. And then the voice was silent as though certain that it needed to say no more.

"Go back to your country, Florestan. Live in your own land with those who truly love you, and who ask for nothing more than to live quietly by your side. Think no more of me, I am an adventuress, a capricious wanderer who by drawing you out of your natural sphere would only work you harm. Marry and found a family, and let it be more numerous than your father's . . . I know the girl who is to be your wife. I know her to be the companion you need. I admire her, and even

have a great affection for her. You will find in her respect and obedience, and love as well."

But at this Florestan could not but protest, and the rising tide of his protest brought back all his doubts.

"But this is absurd, I tell you," he murmured. "It's a nightmare! It can't be true! Something tells me that it is not true."

"That is merely your astonishment. You are still too bewildered to see the truth. . . . But you will grow accustomed to it. That other monstrous image of me still persists in your memory, the me that inspired in you a love entirely of sense. But little by little you will come to think of me as that which I must henceforth be for you."

The young man suddenly straightened up in an attitude of bold resolution.

"Very well, then. If you are my mother you must not abandon me. All my life I have had no mother but a poor blurred picture on a scrap of cardboard. And now that you have suddenly revealed her to me, you want to abandon me? . . . No, it is too unjust!"

She looked at him with eyes of profound pity.

"You have had better luck with your father than with your mother, Florestan. It would have been better if you had never known the truth . . . far, far better if you had been able to keep that other mother . . . the one you never saw. . . . You do not know me. I am one of those adventurous women who never have either home or family, because never do they live fully anywhere save in

passion. I am utterly selfish, incapable of sacrificing myself for anybody. And besides, what do you know of my past life? How do you know that I have not had other experiences similar to the one with your father? . . . If we were to go on together, you would see me forced to grow old, and to live really as a mother. . . . No. I choose rather to wander about the world alone, preserving my youth as long as I can . . . or at least the illusion that I still possess it."

She stood as though crushed by this load of depravities with which she had just strewn her past and present life in deliberate attempt to blacken it. And then as she looked at Florestan, standing, head lowered, hat in hand, receiving full on his neck the burning, prickling sun, she felt that she must bring him out of his distress.

"Besides, who knows the future? . . . We shall meet again perhaps. I shall go to Spain to see your children. I'll arrive quite unexpectedly like those crazy old grandmothers who delude themselves into thinking they are still young, and who suddenly burst into the homes of their grandchildren like some stray, starving, shivering swallow . . . and then, no sooner are they warmed and rested than they are off again for another flight. . . . Still, I haven't much confidence in myself so far as that rôle is concerned. Don't flatter yourself that you have really discovered a mother. I am, when all is said, a very wicked woman! I know that I can never lay aside my cherished habits for anyone. And it is only for the sake of opening

your eyes and rescuing you from a wholly unnatural feeling that I have told you the truth."

But Florestan, his eyes on the ground, was moving his lips.

"It can't be true! . . . It is too incredible! . . ."

And then he fixed his eyes on her, resolutely, as though he had just determined upon a course of action.

"We'll talk about our future some other time . . . when we are more calm than now. Just at present I must confess I can't talk quietly about anything. After what you have told me . . . my brain is in such a whirl!"

Slowly, she assented.

"Yes. We had better part now."

And at once he exclaimed that they must see one another again that very afternoon. The present interview could not very well be prolonged. Rina was obviously growing impatient of her long exile and was making loud speeches to the Pekingese by way of reminding the others of her presence. And thus incited by his companion, Fanchito was uttering the most piercing barks.

Impulsively, Concha met the young man's insistent suggestion that they meet again, that very afternoon, with a gesture of annoyance. Go through this painful sacrifice again! Lie and lie once more when she had thought to end her torment forever! . . . But she took account of the fact that she must utter one more falsehood.

"I am going to Monte Carlo this afternoon, as I always do. We can meet at the Casino. And

there we can talk without fear of being overheard by my friend yonder."

The assurance that he was to see her within a few hours quieted Florestan. He would be able to think over the extraordinary things she had told him; and he would have time to discover new objections . . . who knew? . . . Vaguely he counted on the promised interview and on others to follow; but in reality he did not know now what he wanted. He still felt the attraction this woman had always exercised over him, but without being able precisely to define the nature of his feelings. Without question, it was love he felt. But what kind of love? . . .

"We had better say good-bye here," Concha was saying. "I don't want you to come back with me to the hotel."

"Will you take me with you in your car to Monte Carlo, this afternoon?"

"No. I'd rather you waited for me there."

He seemed filled with uneasiness, as though sensing a danger, and repeated his pleadings. And the voice with which she met his questions was as colourless as an echo.

"Will you let me take tea with you?"

"We'll have tea together."

"And I'll meet you at five o'clock?"

"Yes, at five o'clock."

She held out her hand and the boy raised it to his lips. At the touch of his lips on her skin she quickly withdrew her fingers as though the contact had burned her flesh.

With a final bow to both women, Florestan turned away.

"Until tea-time," he called.

Concha's eyes followed him as he walked down the wide avenue skirting the sea, watched him growing smaller, smaller. . . . "*Adios!* . . . *Adios!*" . . .

"We are going on to Paris this afternoon," she said abruptly to Rina in a tone admitting of no reply. "And from there we shall sail for New York within ten days."

She was thinking of Arbuckle, good kind fellow that he was, and of her ranch in California, and of the New World and the renewed youth it promised. Florestan would not search for her again with the same tenacious ardour as after her first flight. She had pierced his heart. In his breast quivered the poisonous arrow of Doubt with its black feather.

And now the impassable mountain had been raised between them. He would often question the truth of what she had told him. We doubt even certainties when they are obstacles to our desires ; but the seed had been sown in the furrow ; and falsehood in the majority of cases needs only time and distance to be transformed, momentarily at least, into truth. . . . Even if destiny should again bring this man across her path, there would be for her no danger in the meeting. As a shield to defend her against the madness that beautifies and complicates our lives, she would have at her side a calm restful companion like the one she

had chosen when she first ventured out into life.

The tenor had gone back to the beginning of his repertory, and was once more pouring out the throaty sweetness of—

Vieni al mare

Vieni al ma-a-a-re. . .

Her eyes were still following Florestan, so small now . . . so far away! . . . She would soon lose sight of him in the groups making their way toward the town; he would be swallowed up in the crowd of those who were hurrying, spurred by hunger, toward the noonday repast.

"I shall never see him again!"

How important these words suddenly became, how enormously significant!

"I shall never see him again!"

She felt her firm active limbs give way under her as though they had suddenly fallen to pieces. Staggering, she made her way to the nearest bench and fell on its green-painted wood with the despair of one who fears he will never get up from the place where he falls because he knows that the springs of his will are all shattered.

"Ah, the sweet song of that singer, who is singing of the sea! . . . It is like a knife in my breast! . . ."

Some late home-farers, passing by the bench, looked wonderingly at the richly dressed lady sitting there, pressing a handkerchief to her eyes,

and coughing to disguise the sobs of anguish that shook that proud white neck, once so Juno-like.

Poor Queen Calafia! Her voice came panting, supplicating, as from a great distance.

"Rina, *niña mia*! . . . stand in front of me a moment. . . . Don't let them see me. . . . I must weep. . . . I must weep!"

CHAPTER XI

Six Years Later

THE lobby of a famous hotel in the Champs Elysées. Five o'clock in the afternoon. As the leaders of fashionable Paris have agreed among themselves that this season the Gloriosus-Palace is to be the meeting-place of all persons who have any claims to social distinction, a throng eager to see and to be seen, is to be found there at tea-time.

With the majesty of a monarch the head waiter moves up and down the room threading his way among the compact groups of patrons sitting close around the tables. For this personage he has a smile of servility, for those people yonder a haughtily insolent stare. Caprice alone seems to determine his answers to the new arrivals who continue to crowd their way in. He blocks some of them with "No room, none at all." Then, with the assurance of a general directing a battle he improvises places for the patrons he elects to favour. The waiters fly about wedging additional tables into the close-packed groups which contract here and there like so much rubber.

The jazz-band finally makes itself heard above the buzz of chatter. Strains of barbarous dance music, discords, the groans and shrieks of grotesque instruments. In the centre of the lobby couples try to give themselves the illusion that they are dancing as they clutch their partners and move their feet about without making the slightest progress over the dance floor.

Yet all this crowding, confusion, and actual discomfort seem only to whet the enthusiasm of the public. Promptly at the tea hour every afternoon it makes its appearance. Obviously, taking tea at the Gloriosus-Palace is one of the principal diversions of Paris fashionables. There are to be found the personages of the hour, the latest gossip, the scandals of the life of a great city. Every visitor to the French capital feels that he must take tea at least once at the Palace. That is as indispensable a part of his programme as seeing the most successful play of the season.

The *maître-d'hôtel* turns away from several women, conspicuously made up, befeathered, and showily dressed, to whom he has just been declaring with cold formality that there are no places left, and favours three new arrivals with a protecting smile.

A young couple, these—foreigners evidently—and a man past middle-age, gazing about him with ironic curiosity, and apparently the father of one of the young people.

The autocrat of the Gloriosus-Palace suddenly displays a marked affability. Perhaps he has grown

tired of his own insolence, and wants to strike another note. Or perhaps he too has been won by the smiling youthfulness and charm of the pair, and yields to the instinctive sympathy they inspire. With the assurance of one accustomed to performing miracles and certain of his powers, he walks straight toward a vacant table hidden away in the close-packed crowd.

With a smile of thanks to the magnanimous head waiter for his protection, the three sit down and wait patiently for their order to be taken. Not such an easy matter this, for the waiters have to advance cautiously through the circuitous channels that wind between the islands and peninsulas formed by agglomerations of human beings, balancing above their heads, as they do so, trays loaded with glass and china.

"Shall we dance?" the young man asks his companion. "There isn't really room, but when we go back to Madrid we can say that we danced at the Gloriosus-Palace."

Smiling at one another, Florestan and Consuelito get up to join the round mass of revolving couples.

Six years are a small matter when they fall upon untarnished, vigorous youth. Nevertheless, they have brought their accomplished changes here too. Florestan and Consuelito are married, and they have a small son.

Florestan seems of a happier, gayer disposition now than when he was living with his father in

Madrid ; seems younger than in those days. Yet even so the years that have passed have brought fewer changes to him than to Consuelito. She has grown taller, a little heavier too, with that increase in size and weight that maternity brings about in a woman's body. With the duties and responsibilities of her married state, she has taken on a new seriousness, a gentle dignity that is an added charm.

Mascaro, meanwhile, who has accompanied the young people to Paris, takes occasion to stare with somewhat ironic curiosity, at the audacious costumes of the apparently young women and at the magnificent furs of some of the more mature among them. A fine opportunity for his fancy to exercise itself as in the past inventing stories of love and adventure ! Women such as these always interested him, for they live many romances of which no one but themselves for the most part knows anything. But alas ! These six years have ploughed deep furrows in his being, and torn from him his most cherished illusions.

He no longer possesses the strength of imagination necessary to weave the stories that were once his chief diversion. And even if he could have invented them, they no longer interest him, no longer give him any pleasure. For he knows now that they are nothing but lies. Like Don Quixote—the comparison is his own—he has recovered his reason at the end of his life, he can no longer let his fancy take him where it will. He would feel remorseful at giving himself up to unbridled imaginings. A

grandfather has no business to indulge in such childish romancing! And as though his wife, Doña Amparo, had by some mysterious process divined the great transformation that had taken place within him, she no longer torments him with her jealousy and domestic tyranny.

These same six years have greatly changed the direction of that virtuous lady's affections and tantrums. Now she pays little attention to her husband, treats him with scornful indifference, seems in fact scarcely to be aware of his existence. There is something else in her life now to preoccupy her—a child of four, who is already walking, though with uncertain step, and who calls her Grandmama!

Her whole being reflects the child. When the boy is ill, Mascaro has the illusion of living ten years back, for his wife's temper then becomes as aggressive and quarrelsome as in the past. At other times the two grandparents spend hours arguing as to which of his parents the boy most resembles. Doña Amparo is certain his small features reflect those of both Florestan and her daughter, presenting two distinct images yet somehow magically united and harmonized. But the Professor is equally convinced the child is going to look like him, and even discovers in the boy a resemblance to Mascaro's own father, long since dead, whose features he had forgotten during many years, but now suddenly recalls.

Florestan has prospered in these years. An American company bought his Mexican mines, and

he can now, after the financial stringency he experienced just after his marriage, consider himself rich.

These money difficulties, however, required the utmost economy even at the time of his marriage. Florestan had not been able then to take his wife on a wedding trip to Europe. But now that he is sure of a relatively ample income, he is making up for this omission. And he invited his wife's parents to accompany this somewhat unusual wedding journey.

But Doña Amparo refused the invitation.

"And what about my grandchild? You don't expect to drag him about from one place to another as though he were no better than a gypsy, do you? I'm going to stay here and take care of him. Anyhow, what do I care about your Paris and other such wicked places?"

Since she has become a grandmother, Mascaro's wife has tried as hard to grow old as other women do to remain young. She has given up the styles that were in vogue when she was a girl—styles that she had always persisted in considering the final expression of true elegance. Laid aside are her wasp-waisted corset with bulging hips, and her befrizzled and towering coiffure! Doña Amparo now delights in jet bonnets and dark-coloured clothes.

But Mascaro, on the contrary, accepted the invitation with the utmost enthusiasm. For he is a modern, and feels certain that he is going to be ill with some terrible malady if several years pass

by without his crossing the frontiers of his native land.

Arrived in Paris, he displays the curiosity of an adolescent. All these once familiar scenes have taken on a new interest, as though they had grown younger, fresher. This springtime Paris is very different from the Paris he saw the last time he was there, six years ago. . . .

Yes, the memory of that journey, when he and his daughter came to find Florestan, still saddens him. But then he feels the pleasure of the happy contrast between that occasion and the present.

The young couple stop dancing and come back to their table. Florestan is already planning where they will go after leaving Paris. There are other great cities where, he assures his wife, there would be less crowding, less confusion, and airier, more spacious amusement places.

She listens absently, looking at him with caressing and submissive eyes, as always. But it is easy to see that behind her shining pupils there is nothing for the moment. Her thoughts are very far away, running, running through the six years of her life that have elapsed since that last trip to Paris.

It is as though her father's thoughts had passed on to her. Mascaro is now busily engaged looking at the dancers who are clapping for the band to repeat the dance that they may begin once more their obstinate attempts to make progress through the revolving crowd. Mascaro now has quite forgotten about his last trip to Paris. But his daughter has suddenly remembered it and a melancholy un-

touched by bitterness takes possession of her, though her eyes continue to smile at her husband.

It is the girl Consuelito she sees in her home in Madrid on that morning when her father came towards her with a mysterious air as though to impart important news.

"Florestan is ill in Paris. He is alone there, his friends say. And they think he may put an end to himself. . . . So I am going to get him. Now that his father is gone, the poor boy has no one but me. . . ."

Under her timidity and humility there was an unguessed tenacity of affection, an eagerness to sacrifice herself for whatever inspired in her any form of love. So when her father had done she told him he must take her with him to Paris. A woman, she explained, is always cleverer than a man when it comes to nursing someone who is sick.

Doña Amparo, however, had objections to make. Her woman's instinct had told her that when Florestan left Madrid his thoughts were taken up with another woman far more than with her daughter.

"I don't understand why you want to bother with him if he doesn't care to have anything to do with us! All he thinks about is that foreign woman, that Queen . . . I forget her name . . . the one several men I know made fools of themselves over"—this with a terrible glance at her husband. "Anyhow, you've got to consider the expense of the trip too."

But, for the first time in their lives, father and

daughter, allies now that they were animated by the same purpose, rebelled against the tyrant, and braving her displeasure, left for Paris.

They found Florestan sitting motionless in an armchair in his hotel. He was not ill in the physical sense of the word, but evidently suffering from some sort of moral paralysis which kept him weeks at a time in his room.

But he welcomed Mascaro with evident satisfaction. Mascaro had known the person who obsessed his thought. Florestan believed at first that the new arrival must be bringing him news of *her*. . . .

At sight of Consuelito, however, he grew uneasy, as though with remorse, replying timidly to her chatter, and, at first, taking care to avoid being left alone with the girl.

The Professor, divining that Florestan would feel the need of unburdening himself, managed to go and see the young man without his daughter. He left the girl with some Spanish friends of his one afternoon, called on the invalid, and very skilfully set about reconstructing what had occurred several months earlier.

On recalling the terrible hours he had spent at Nice, Florestan nearly broke down. He had experienced nothing worse in his whole existence. It had taken him a long time to convince himself that Concha Ceballos had really run away, that she had deceived him in making an appointment to meet him later on the very day of their first meeting. And then her disappearance . . . not only that, but the gradual realization, as his efforts

to discover her whereabouts failed one by one, that he never would see her again. . . .

Following a vague clue, he had reached Paris, only to lose all traces of her there. No one, it seemed, had any news of Queen Calafia. He tried to find Arbuckle, and failed. He too, it seemed had disappeared. In vain he perused the passenger lists of all the navigation companies, looking for Mrs. Douglas's name. Even her companion, the dashing Rina, careless as she was in general about everything she did, had disappeared in an equally mysterious manner, leaving not a single trace.

In London, perhaps, he would have better luck, he thought. But his efforts there met with equal lack of success. Queen Calafia had vanished forever!

He returned to Paris resolved to take passage to the United States. Yes, he felt certain he would find her there. It never entered his head—for he had all the emotional positiveness of the Latin in this respect—that any woman he loved could fail to love him, or could seriously oppose him.

But suddenly, reason, cold and cutting, destroyed his will. Why should he pursue a woman who so evidently wanted to escape him? . . . And besides, what was his object in pursuing her?

He recalled the terrible revelation she had made to him on the Promenade des Anglais. If she was really his mother, as she had tried to make him believe, what was the use of pursuing her? She did not want to see him, she wanted doubtless to

forget the past! What though he did find her? They would have one more interview, perhaps, a few moments together, nothing more, and once again she would begin her flight over all the oceans of the globe, in search of new countries where she would be safe from his pursuit.

The thought of Concha's indifference, the doubts that haunted him as to his real relations to this woman whom he had sought as a lover and who claimed to be his mother, finally broke down Florestan's will. He gave himself up to a morbid resignation, remaining in his room for weeks at a time, as though the sight of people moving about the street filled him with terror. His friends in Paris, seeing him living like a recluse, and at times neglecting his person and receiving callers with indifference, with no desire, it seemed, to take up a normal life, believed that the moral infirmity from which he was suffering was destined sooner or later to destroy his reason.

The first time Mascaro went to see him at his hotel, he found Florestan wearing a waterproof, as though it were a dressing gown, and it was evident that he had not shaved for days. The arrival of the Professor and his daughter forced the young man to give a little more care to his appearance, but he was far from recovering his earlier energy. The need he felt of describing his sufferings to someone, impelled him to reveal everything to Mascaro, who displayed all the kindly, insinuating tolerance of a confessor.

"Do you believe she is really my mother?"

Florestan asked him with anguish when he had ended the recital of his sufferings.

Mascaro maintained a perplexed silence. That story about Queen Calafia and her deceased friend Balboa reminded him of his own stories, invented to satisfy his hungering imagination. Certainly a very interesting, unexpected, and original revelation, this of the lady's! He would never have guessed that there was any such romance between Ricardo Balboa and the Californian. But the very resemblance between the story Florestan had repeated and his own creations filled him with doubt, and finally, he declared with conviction:

"All that is pure fiction. I have no proofs to back up what I say, but just the same I am sure of it."

Florestan was pleased with this conclusion. But then, with the ingenuousness of the lover, he asked:

"Why does she run away from me if she isn't what she says she is? Why does she leave me like this as though I had proposed something monstrous?"

"Because she doesn't love you, foolish boy!" the Professor replied cruelly. "Because doubtless she loves some other man and wants to be free of you. . . . Even though you did succeed in finding her again, it would be of no use."

Florestan hated him for several days after this with all the intensity of hatred that the sick man feels for the doctor who with brutal frankness has revealed to him the gravity of his illness. He refused pointblank to consider the Professor's

expressed desire to take him back to Madrid, received him when he called with marked ill-humour, and in fact could endure him only when he was accompanied by Consuelito.

She at least was a real friend, the only person in the world who took a sincere interest in him! What a pity it was that he could not fall in love with her! As a companion, yes, she was perfect. It was almost as though they were of the same sex. But never once had he heard from her lips a single harsh word, a single reproach.

Yielding to the girl's gentle suggestions, he little by little resumed his customary activities. The needs and desires he had known in the past slowly came to life once more. He began to pay more attention to his appearance, chiefly for her sake. He didn't want to cause her any embarrassment when she went out with him.

As he believed himself alone in the world now, he was profoundly touched by Consuelito's visits. It seemed so extraordinarily kind of her to come! And he felt less unhappy when she was with him. After a while, he needed her presence. He had felt actually annoyed by her coming on from Madrid to see him, but was now disturbed if many hours went by without his seeing her.

Mascaro usually accompanied them on their walks on the boulevards or in their excursions to the Bois de Boulogne and other suburbs of the capital. But there were occasions when he had to call on some of the University Professors—celebrities in the academic world—whom he had

met at international congresses of one kind and another. And he had to spend a good deal of time at the Bibliothèque Nationale making notes from some rare books there for a treatise on history he had always intended to write—although as a matter of fact he felt a vague suspicion that when he died his book would still be unwritten. But these preoccupations of his brought it about that his daughter and Florestan often had to go on their expeditions without him.

"You two young people are like brother and sister," Don Antonio observed once more. "You've known one another since you were babies and nobody has any reason to talk if you are seen going out together."

When Mascaro recalled his earlier trip to Paris in search of Florestan, he could not but admire his daughter's conduct. What treasures of self-abnegation and strength of will are sometimes hidden away in a young girl, outwardly so demure and untried by experience! . . .

Like a spectator watching the last scenes of a film romance unroll at the cinema, he watched the awakening in Florestan of the new love that was to restore him to life.

Outwardly, his daughter gave no sign of caring any more for the playmate of her childhood than a sister might do. She knew how impossible this love of hers was and tried to hide it from every one, even from herself. But she did not for all this draw away from Florestan, nor did her self-esteem suffer any wound from it. For she felt

something greater than love—a profound compassion, a need of sacrifice, something resembling a mother's immeasurable tenderness.

Even while she suffered the torment of jealousy, she found a bitter and intense pleasure in this inner anguish. It was but one sacrifice the more dedicated to a hopeless love ; it gave her the cruel pleasure of suffering through the beloved.

At times, Florestan was aware of what was going on in his friend. Words escaped her now and then that made him guess the secret locked in the girl's heart. Sometimes her eyes would fill with tears, and he could see how courageously she forced herself to check her weeping even as it began, and smile with assumed merriment.

Florestan was disposed at first to be both cruel and unjust toward Consuelito's resignation and humility. He thought her weak, lacking in energy. Of course, she must suffer cruel disappointment at being treated with such indifference by the man she loved, and she must be jealous too of the other woman. Yet she did not even venture to protest, she gave not the slightest sign of rebelling against her fate !

But then he took time to reflect, to review the past. When they were children together Mascaro's daughter had been as strong-willed and self-assertive as a boy. And he knew that in her relations with her girl friends Consuelito gave evidence of a somewhat touchy dignity, and insisted on being treated with the respect she thought due to her. Yet towards him she always

acted with a gentle humility and loyalty proof against every form of indifference and lack of appreciation—with a devotion, in short, comparable only to the tenacious faith of the fanatic for the person he cherishes as a saint or as a god.

Slowly, pondering it ever anew, Florestan took account of the girl's love for him. And while it flattered his vanity, it also filled him with remorse.

He began to feel drawn towards her by a kind of chivalrous gratitude. In spite of the indifference he displayed, she persisted in considering him the centre of everything in the universe! He felt ashamed, as though he had done something base, unworthy of a gentleman, unworthy of a man. . . .

They were walking one afternoon along a deserted pathway in the Bois de Boulogne when Florestan, moved perhaps by the soft melancholy of the sunset, gently took the girl's hand in his.

"I don't deserve all you are doing for me," he said sadly. "How can I thank you for all the sacrifices I feel you are making?"

She looked down at the ground to hide the tears welling up in her eyes. Then, making a great effort to speak with pretended coldness:

"There should be no question of thanks or of deserts between us," she said. "Whatever I can do for you is of small consequence. I have always loved you, and life has no meaning for me except through you. If it lay within my power, I would give you what you want so much."

Florestan knew what she meant. Consuelito loved him, and yet she was ready to give him his

Queen Calafia, that elusive phantom his heart persistently pursued! Had she but the power, this girl would deliberately take her rival by the hand and draw her towards him for the sake of making him happy—even though it should cost her her life!

He was moved by the generosity of this girl's soul. He felt that he was far less noble than she, and humbly he replied:

"Oh, Consuelito, it is you I want. . . . See what you have done! A few weeks ago I hoped I would die. But now I want to live!"

In the days that followed, Mascaro noticed that a great transformation was taking place in the son of his old friend. It was now Florestan who sought him out, and came daily to see him and his daughter at his hotel.

And as each day passed, the boy seemed to lose one of the years that had heaped themselves upon him during the time of his suffering. Now he dressed as carefully as in the old days, he could smile once more, he had forgotten his grudge against Mascaro for what the latter had said about Queen Calafia.

"This young man is almost himself again," thought the Professor. "No danger of his putting an end to his life now."

Florestan was even willing to go back to Madrid. In fact, it was he who suggested it. He had suddenly discovered that he didn't like Paris or any other place where people were not in the habit of talking Spanish.

"People ought to live in their own country, Don

Antonio," he observed to Mascaro, with a smile at Consuelito. "It's much better to live with one's own people."

When the three reached Madrid, Florestan at once spoke of his marriage with Consuelito as something quite settled, something that had been arranged while his father was living, spoke of it as though the project had never been subject to any changes and vicissitudes, and intimated that he wanted to carry it out as soon as possible.

Doña Amparo, who affected to be a skilful judge of men, showed every disposition to be reassured after a few days' observation of Florestan. She was at last convinced that he was thinking only of her daughter now, and not at all of the "other woman."

Still, she couldn't understand how the miracle had been brought about. The admiration she felt for her daughter, who had accomplished so marvellous a transformation in so short a time, took the form of somewhat melancholy comments, addressed chiefly to herself.

"Girls nowadays are so different from what they used to be!" she would exclaim. "They look like boys and they act like boys, but they have a fine hand for managing men! When I was a girl I couldn't have done it!"

After his marriage, Florestan, now ready to take an active part in life and anxious to provide his wife with every comfort and luxury, had been forced to make vigorous efforts to set his business affairs in order. He had finally attained a modest

degree of wealth, sufficient, however, to allow him to view the future with tranquillity. And now here they were in the lobby of the Gloriosus-Palace, enjoying the first stages of the long trip they contemplated making through all the countries of Europe.

As Consuelito dwelt on the memories of the past her surroundings evoked, she looked anxiously at her husband. Apparently, he was not at that moment thinking of anything in particular. But one glance at his beloved features quieted her. She could be sure now of Florestan. The events of the past which had cost her so many tears would never be repeated.

"Shall we have another dance?" she suggested.

And once more they joined the crowd laboriously endeavouring to move in rhythm with the strident music.

Mascaro, following them with an affectionate glance, went on recalling the events of an earlier period in the lives of all three.

Long stretches of time went by without his giving a thought to Concha Ceballos and the other persons who had figured in this woman's history when she was in Madrid. But now, he scarcely knew why, his thoughts dwelt insistently on her. Where was she, he wondered, at that moment, and what fate had destiny allotted to her?

It was by sheer accident, and after her flight from Europe, that he had learned Queen Calafia's story. He was dining one evening at the Ritz with an Austrian Professor who happened to be

passing through Madrid. At the last moment he had been on the point of refusing his colleague's invitation, as he felt somewhat indisposed that evening. If he hadn't pulled himself together and kept that particular engagement, he would in all probability never have learned some rather interesting things. . . .

They were lingering over their coffee, absorbed by an obscure problem of prehistoric times, when a woman, gorgeously dressed and bejewelled, who had missed not a single dance, always appearing on the floor with the same partner, approached their table.

"You don't remember me, Professor?"

Mascaro had glanced at her several times during the course of the evening, for her beauty was of an unusual type and he had idly wondered from what strange race this woman might be descended. But after a while he gave up this difficult problem. His curious glances had not passed unnoticed however, and the lady, after watching him attentively for a while, finally got up and came toward his table.

But Don Antonio had a good memory for faces, and suddenly he remembered who she was. Rina Sanchez, of course, but magnificently got up, as though with a deliberate attempt to make up to herself for the humiliations she had once endured as a companion. Several times—positive indication of her enormous wealth—she had placed herself in the hands of the beauty doctor for the purpose of having flabby flesh removed, so that

her face looked smaller, the skin tightly drawn over the cheek-bones. Masses of hair, pulled down over the temples, concealed the scars of these surgical operations.

She seemed anxious to acquaint Mascaro with her social progress, and told the Professor much that he had already learned from Florestan. She too had sold her share in the Mexican mine, and now considered herself wealthy. She was, she told him, taking a wedding trip through Europe, and had made a particular point of having her itinerary include Spain, even though only for a few days. It was, he could see, a supreme pleasure to her vanity to appear as a fine lady in the places where once she had lived as the companion of her friend and protectress.

"My husband," said she, introducing a man much younger than herself, who stood behind her in an attitude of mocking, spiteful—not to say vengeful—inferiority. He was a "baron" of uncertain nationality who had suddenly fallen in love with her after the sale of the mine, and whom she had married in the United States. At sight of him, Mascaro was reminded of the Marquis Casa Botero.

Rina thereupon began to speak of Queen Calafia and there was noticeable a disparaging note verging on contempt in her voice—the ingratitude people often display when they attain sudden wealth, and can frankly express their dislike of those who helped them when they were in want, for it wounds their vanity to remember these episodes in their past.

"Concha married a long time ago, didn't you know that, Professor? . . . She married Mr. Arbuckle in California when we came back from Europe."

After this chance encounter at the Ritz, Mascaro devoted considerable time to wondering whether he had better share the news imparted to him with the other members of his family. Finally, he reached a decision. Why shouldn't Florestan and Consuelito know what had become of Queen Calafia? It would be a test—a test that ought to be made. For the manner in which they received it would show whether or not Concha Ceballos had passed out of their lives forever.

And he acted promptly on his decision. Florestan received the news with no sign of perturbation.

"She did well, I think, to marry Arbuckle," he said. "He's a decent fellow, the best man she could have chosen."

As to Consuelito, she seemed happier and more tranquil if possible than before. At times, when she was in a playful mood and wanted to tease her husband a little, she would say:

"Do you remember the time when you were in love with Queen Calafia? You must feel dreadfully jealous of that American she married!"

But Florestan, with a shrug of the shoulders, displayed such indifference at these allusions that his wife soon ceased making them.

The two young people stopped dancing, and Mascaro interrupted his meditations to smile at

his daughter and her husband as they came back to sit down beside him.

Finally, a waiter succeeded in making his way to their table bringing the tea they had ordered.

While they were engaged in preventing the backs of their neighbours' chairs from scaping against their table, and holding their cups out of danger as couples elbowed their way to the dance floor, the Professor's cup for quite another reason gave a violent jerk that spilled some of the contents on the cloth. He had caught a sudden glimpse. . . .

The *maître d'hôtel* with a majestic sweep of the hand was insolently opening a path through the crowd for a new couple that had just entered the hall, and which, under the guidance of this factotum, was making its way toward a table miraculously concealed until that moment. Mascaro could see only the backs of the newcomers, but there was something about the calm assured bearing of both the woman and her escort which sufficed to startle him. "How strange!" he said to himself. "How strange that now, at this very moment. . . . Such a coincidence is really amazing!"

Then he reflected that, usually, thinking of a person is not sufficient to evoke that person. Yet there are times—rare occasions, it is true—when chance seems to like to play such tricks. It does happen now and then that the person who has suddenly come into our thoughts after an absence of many years takes form and substance and appears in the flesh before us.

The *maitre d'hôtel* retired after having provided places for his new patrons, and Mascaro, stretching his neck to the utmost, tried hard to see over the heads of his neighbours, and even raised himself a little on his chair.

Unconsciously, the woman turned her face toward Mascaro, who could not restrain a gesture of surprise, and of triumph. He had not made a mistake! What a keen eye he had, to be sure, for recognizing people! . . . It *was* Queen Calafia. . . .

She and her husband must be taking the same kind of trip through Europe as his daughter and son-in-law. Of course, that must be Arbuckle with her, his old friend Arbuckle, grown stouter, heavier, oppressively dignified—quite changed from the Arbuckle he had known in Madrid.

“It’s easy to see those two are fairly dripping with dollars,” thought the Professor. “They simply reek of millions. Arbuckle must have increased his wife’s fortune considerably. And what time has done to them!”

The same six years that had left no mark on Florestan and his wife seemed to have hardened and crystallized on Queen Calafia’s face like the rust-scaled suriade time brings to fine old bronze statues.

Not that she had lost her beauty! That she could never do. Even as an old, old woman she would still have the distinction and dignity of bearing that famous beauties have known how to preserve to the last. Even now, as she entered

the room, many a head had turned toward her with a glance of admiration and curiosity.

But now it was plainly written on her features that she was no longer young. Nor would she ever regain the air of youth no matter how she might try, no matter how lavishly she might spend her fortune to attain this end.

Yielding to the mysterious power which makes us turn round when someone is gazing fixedly at us behind our backs, Concha Ceballos turned her head several times toward the place where Don Antonio was sitting, until finally she recognized him.

Not the slightest betrayal of surprise in expression or gesture. What a woman! thought Mascaro, admiring her impassivity, and the strength of will she must have exercised to check her first impulse of astonishment at the discovery she had made.

And then, divining—logically enough—what she was going to see, Queen Calafia slightly changed the direction of her glance so as to take in the people who were with Mascaro.

No trace of emotion, not the slightest change of expression, nor the slightest wavering of her glance. She might have been examining two people who were perfect strangers to her, whose concerns could not possibly interest her.

Instinctively, the Professor looked at the two young people, impelled to catch their attention and hold it so they would not have a chance to make the same discovery he had made. But he lost heart on seeing that the eyes of both were fixed on

Queen Calafia. Perhaps some gesture of his had betrayed the fact of her presence. Perhaps Consuelito and Florestan, their attention caught by some movement of his, had followed his glance, and had discovered Concha Ceballos.

This mutual contemplation lasted a few instants, no more. But time has an elastic quality and is measured by our state of mind. We all have experienced wearisome colourless hours that count for less in our lives than so many seconds, while others, pregnant with feeling and events seem as long as years.

Florestan, on recognizing Queen Calafia, for a moment felt the commotion of profound surprise. But at once he controlled himself, and contemplated her with cold composure.

Surprise, that was all he felt, surprise! Then, instinctively aware that he must reassure his wife, he took her hand, pressing it gently.

The two women were still looking at one another. Into Queen Calafia's impassive eyes there came a glow of generous good-will and sympathy. Consuelito felt grateful for this rapid glance of affection. There was nothing more to fear from her former enemy. . . .

But then selfish triumph in her happiness made her unkind for a few moments. She could not deny herself the perverse pleasure she derived from taking account of the havoc the years were working in that magnificent human tower. Yes, Queen Calafia was as remarkable as ever, and still handsome. But she was beginning to grow old. . . .

The younger woman's vanity prompted her to a cruel decision.

"Shall we dance?" she asked her husband, and her tone admitted of no refusal.

She must show off her happiness to this other woman. She would pass close to her former rival's table on *his* arm as they made their way to the dance-floor. . . . And several times they danced before Concha Ceballos.

The first time Queen Calafia looked at them with indifference. And then she thought it unnecessary, it seemed, to look at them any more.

Her husband was not even aware of them. Arbuckle was laughing with wholesome, child-like merriment at the way the various couples were jostling one another in their efforts to move in the close-packed circle. American business man as he was, accustomed to doing things on a large scale, he felt a kind of amused pity for the small dimensions of this resort which had been described to him as one of the most famous in all the wide globe.

Suddenly, Mascaro discovered that the places of the two millionaires were vacant. He had not seen them go away. They must have taken advantage of the general confusion that followed every dance. By the time Florestan and Consuelito returned to their table, Queen Calafia had already vanished.

The two young people smiled at one another, as if animated by the recent encounter. They clasped hands under the table as though trying to convince

one another—and themselves—that the past was really dead—quite dead.

Consuelito was frankly happy. Now, for the first time, she was certain of her victory. But for Florestan, rejoicing was somewhat mixed with bitterness and hate. That woman had dared once to say she was his mother. . . . Why had she lied so . . . that particular lie? . . . Such an invention seemed to him an insult.

Mascaro remained silent, trying to pass unnoticed, for he felt that the two young people would have preferred to be alone at that moment. To prevent himself from growing too keenly conscious of how inopportune his presence was, he gave himself up to a kind of inner soliloquy.

“Good-bye, Queen Calafia, forever!” he was saying, “and good-bye, too,” he reflected, “to your romantic passion, and sublime self-sacrifice! . . . Life makes its own arrangements with us, and, logically enough, life itself solves our conflicts and disposes of our passions. There is something that is even stronger than love. It is youth—youth which subdues and conquers love whenever love strays from its natural road. Since the beginning of the world, the young have sought out the young. Riches and glory, though they may conquer the world, have no power over youth if youth chooses to despise them!”

Then with ironic pessimism he added :

“How foolish it is to kill oneself for love as some of our heroes do in novels and plays! We should have more faith in time’s power to solve our

problems. Life itself is the panacea that cures all things ! ”

But after all he did not feel inclined to continue his soliloquy. For suddenly he discovered that he did not feel quite so sure about all this. He remembered that ten years earlier he would not have believed what he had just asserted so positively—that he could not have believed it so long as the springs of his imagination still ran free, so long as he could make his own inner life a happy one by inventing love stories in which the very beautiful unknown who crossed his path played the rôle of heroine. . . .

Illusion ! Bewitching siren, whose songs lend beauty and courage to our lives, in themselves so illusory, so full of self-deception ! If only we could keep you forever with us ! . . . For old age begins the moment you forsake us. . . .

FINIS

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